

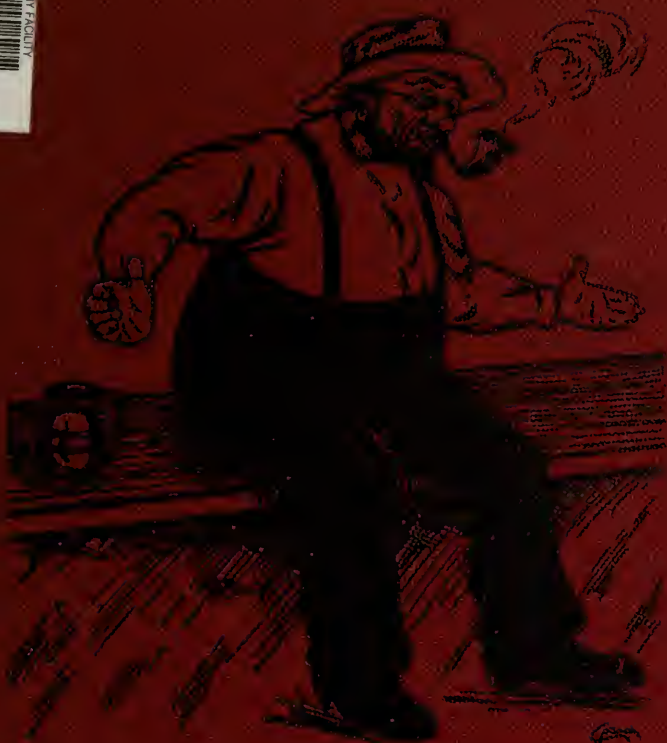
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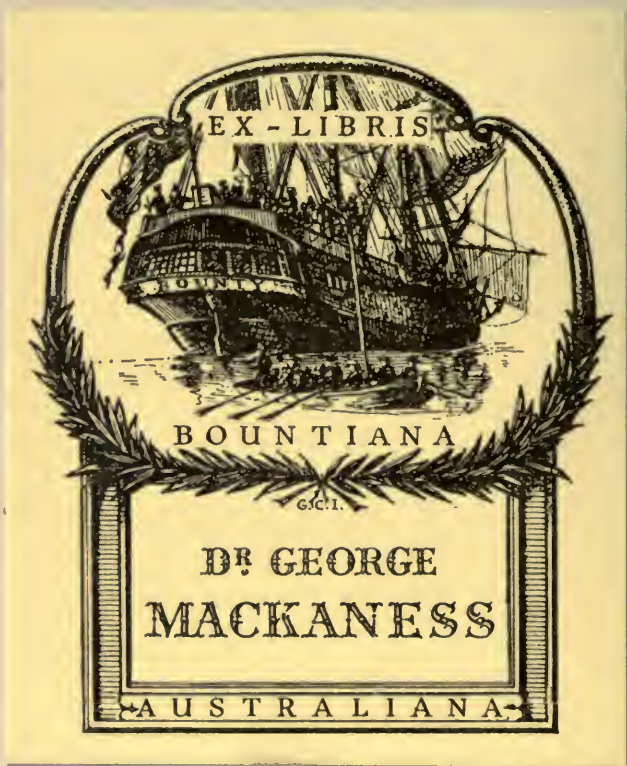
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GOLIATH JOE, FISHERMAN



BY
CHARLES THACKERAY
(WONGFONG)

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GOLIATH JOE, FISHERMAN.



"GOLIATH JOE."

GOLIATH JOE, FISHERMAN

BY

CHARLES THACKERAY
(WOBBERGONG)



SYDNEY AND MELBOURNE PUBLISHING CO., LTD.,
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DEDICATION.

To My Brother-Anglers and Fellow-Liars.

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Some of these stories were printed in the "Sunday Times" (Sydney), "Referee" (Sydney), under the author's then pen-name of "Glaucus"; one in the "Sydney Mail," Sydney, and one in "The Australian Journalist." Several are new, and now see print for the first time. Thanks are accorded the proprietors of the papers named for permission to print in book form.

THE CIRCUS SHARK.

George Brown had been telling us some of his experiences while out in South Africa, and, as it was rather a hot evening, the talk naturally turned to places where the temperature was not quite so suggestive of lemon squash and things. George had been endeavoring to convey to us some idea of how cold it was camping out while on trek with the troops. The Madgeburg Ranges in winter supplied his most vivid impressions, and he had waxed quite eloquent concerning the cold of that part of Africa. Goliath Joe had dropped in quietly while the talk about cold had been going on, and he had evidently listened with ill-concealed impatience to Geordie's honest efforts to do the subject justice. Anything served Joe for a peg on which to hang some marvellous piscatorial exploit in which he had taken a prominent, if not sole part, and after some finesse in order to find out whose turn it was to repeat a well-known formula regarding refreshments, Joe took the conversation his way.

"Yer don't know what cold is, Geordie," he said. "You want to be out all night in the middler July with a westerly blowin'. Cold! Well, ye'll hardly believe me, Geord, but I've cut myself on a ragged edge of a bit o' yellertail friz as 'ard as crystal. Over an' over agen I've treadled my finger on the 'ook insteader the prawn, an' ony found out I done it when I went to chuck in fer a brim."

"Say," said one of the men standing round; "that must have hurt you, Joe."

"'Urt me!" said Joe, with a fine assumption of scorn for such a trivial incident. "No; I 'ad my own way o' dealing with little things like that. I'd jest blow through the 'ole after I'd pulled the 'ook out and squirt a mouthful of salt water through it, an' it'd 'eal itself. If there's one thing my family can pride itself on, it's our quick 'ealin' flesh. But I was goin' ter tell yer about our fishin' one night. Look 'ere, Geord, I've sometimes been that tired an' sleepy with the cold that I've slept next day plump round th' clock after a night's brimmin' in winter. Lumme, we wanted some divershuns, jest sittin' an' waitin' and sittin' an' freezin'. Cold! Why I've bin that cold that if I sat in one place next day for three 'ours I wouldn't warm the spot I sat on."

"Did you get any fish?" asked George.

"I'm comin' ter that," said Goliath. "You remember Jack Morris an' Bill 'Ines what went West a month or so ago. Well, we used ter be fishin' cobbbers then—I'm torkin' of twenty-nine years ago, yer know—an' one night we decided to give Middle Head a try. We was all stickers. None of us'd chuck it because ther fish didn't come as soon as we liked. No, Geord, it wasn't patience made us do that. It was fair ram's obstinacy what made us keep on, because we noo the fish'd come. 'Sides, it was allus a point of honor with us never to give in till we 'ad seven or eleven fish. If we touched the eight we noo we could do the eleven, an' if we didn't pass the eleven in 'arf-an-hour we used ter chuck it fer the day or the night. After gettin' eleven we 'ad no limit. Sometimes we'd stop at 500, but speakin' general, it was the bait runnin' out that moved us. But I was goin' ter tell yer about a shark we sent balmy one o' those cold mornin's.

"We'd bin waitin' jest near Middle 'ead from eight o'clock in the evenin' till four o'clock in the

mornin', an' by Josh it was cold. We 'adn't 'ad a knock from a brim all night long, an' ther sun was jest slitterin' up over the sea in the east when a shoal er yellertail an' mackerel came along. Jest ter keep awake we outed our number twenty-four silk twists with fly 'ooks on, an' started ketchin' 'em. Everybody got 'em—couldn't miss 'em, in fact—an' it wiled the time away nice. Pretty soon we 'ad the floor o' the boat covered with 'em. I suppose there was fully 219 o' them little midgets in the boat, when all of a sudden a shark comes round an' snavelled a yellertail offer Billy's lire. 'E wasn't much more than twenty-nine foot long, ef 'e was quite that, so I ses to ther blokes I ses: "'Ere, chaps, keep 'im round an' feed 'im. We might tame 'im.' Jack agrees, although Bill wasn't too 'earty about it, an' Jack chucks a yellertail in near the bow. I was sittin' on the middle thort, an' I slips one over ter starboard an' Bill slings one over astern. Well, that bloomin' shark raced round for the fish an' buried 'em in 'is stride, making a circle o' the boat in doin' it."

"Quite a novelty," said one of the crowd.

"That's jest what I ses at the time," said Go-liath, "but mind yer 'e looked ter be quite a philanthropicalistic shark—ah!—it makes me dreadful dry talkin'."

Someone took the hint, and the ancient went on:

"I sees there was a bit of a game in it, so on my advice we threw mackerels an' bait in turn a little ahead o' the shark, an' 'e took to it lovely, racin' round like a circus pony. Well, ter cut a long story short, that dumb fool of a shark kep' going when there wasn't no bait left ter giv' 'im. 'E couldn't stop issself, an' 'e went round an' round that boat till I thought 'e'd ketch 'is own tail. We were watchin' an' laughin' like kids, an' that's where we fell in."

"Not in the water?" queried Geordie.

"No, not exactly," said Joe, "but we fell in orl-right. What 'appened was this: 'This 'ere silly fool of a shark went round so fast that 'e made a wortex like one er those holes yer can make in a tub er water by twistin' yer 'and round in it quick, an' our bloomin' boat was settlin' down into it nice an' easy without us noticin'. I know orl about wortexes since I 'eard a lecture on whirlpools. There was nothin' to be alarmed about, but Bill, when 'e see what'd 'appened, yells: 'O Lor'l' an' falls back half dead with fright. Me an' Jack kep' cool, although we found it much warmer down the funnel outer the wind. Mind yer, that was orl segarnio, better than bein' up on the top any'ow. But after awhile the boat begun ter spin round too, an' things wasn't so good. I s'pose we corkscrewed down about thirty-nine feet inter the basement er Middle 'Arbor, an' I tell yer we saw things. I'll tell yer about them some other time. But suddenly Jack ses: "'Ere, I'm full o' this foolin', whirley-gluggeddy business.' I thought 'e was orf 'is nut, but 'e wasn't. 'E ketches 'old of a handful o' dead crook prawns we 'ad for makin' berley an' shies 'em up ther funnel o' the wortex. We could see 'em settlin' down slow through the water, an' they looked as big as plates through the sides o' the funnel. The smell o' them prawns seemed ter shake the shark some, an' a bit come off 'is speed. Then the stink of 'em 'it 'im good an' strong, an' 'e swerved in their direction, an' we rose a few feet. As 'e got further away, so the wortex got weaker, an' we kep' risin' until at last we shot up on ter the top of the water like a cork out of a bottle er temperance squiff, an' the cold wind 'it us again."

"You must have felt giddy," said one of the chaps.

"Giddy? Well, yes, we was a bit that way, wizzy-like in the upper wuks; but none on us 'ad any iller effex than could be wiped out with a drop

er that stuff with the Scotch name on it the waiter's carryin' in. We noo, o' course, that we'd get no brim after orl this caperin'. It was as bad as three weeks' nettin' or a day's dynamitin', so we orled in the kellicks an' got."

"Wait a bit, Goliath," said a listener, "how could your boat spin round with the lines and weights down fore and aft for breaming?"

"How could it?" repeated Joe. "I can't say—I on'y know it did—an' if you think I'm lyin' about it yer must be a thickeader fool than yer look! I've got no time ter be explainin' things to blokes that chip in with fool questions jest ter try an' get up a argument. You'll get proof er what I says some day when yer fishin' for sharks. If yer ketch one with a swivelly look in 'is eye an' a kink in 'is right side, an' wot swims a bit outer the straight, you'll know yer've caught our shark; but, if you take my advice, yer won't start throwin' 'im mackerel or yellertail. If yer do ye'll fall in an' that's orl about it!"

THE IMMORAL LEATHER-JACKET.

"Ketch 'em where yer like," said Goliath Joe to the select coterie that always hung upon the old man's lips, "leather-jackets is a dumb noosance. They're the most unmoral scrowshers in the bloom-in' ocean. They're like shags—chain-eaters. Yer couldn't fill a shag or a jacket if yer poured bait into it with a funnel. One family of jackets could eat throo a 'amper of prawns in about ten minutes without bustin' a scale."

"Bad old monacanthus. He's always giving somebody trouble," remarked George Brown, the returned soldier with the game leg, who was always Joe's great stand-by for tobacco and other luxuries.

"That's right," said Joe; "swear at it Geordie."

"I wasn't swearin', Joe," replied George. "I was using its scientific name."

"Good enuff for it," retorted Joe. "I wish yer'd takes a arfternoon orf an' teach me some o' them words. I've wore out orl my language on 'em."

"What's the matter with the family, anyhow?" asked George. "They're good to eat. Better than catfish, any day."

"Maybe, maybe," replied Goliath Joe; "but who'd eat either of 'em w'en they could get good red fish. Gimme brim or nannygi or groper first. But it ain't the flesh of 'em I'm squealin' about. Wot I don't like is the 'abits o' the leather-jacket. Yer'll 'ardly ever ketch a leather-jacket, wot ain't got 'is gizzard full o' grub; an' where does 'e get it. I arsk yer?"

"Don't know," replied George. "Hunts for it, I suppose."

"No!" snapped Joe, "'e don't. 'E lets the other fish 'unt, an' 'e stands by an' ketches the food as it goes by. 'E can bite quicker'n a bloke can shut a knife, an' wot 'e shuts 'is jaws on ain't got no option but to get torn or swallowed 'ole. Teeth! Did yer ever see 'em? By josh, Geordie, them buck teeth of a jacket is made for razor work orl right. They gets on to a bit o' bait like a snapper on to a cungeboy."

"What have some of the leather-jackets got horns for?" asked one of the bystanders.

"To learn people not to 'andle them," replied Joe. "If yer ever got a prod from one o' them you've never forgot it, I'll warrant. They poison yer if they get well in. One ickybolo——"

"What's up, Joe?" asked Geordie. "Want to sneeze?"

"No," replied Joe. "Wot d'yer call them museum blokes wot examines fish?"

"Ichthyologists," said someone.

"That's it," said Joe. "One o' them ickybol-watcher-may-callums told me there wern't no poison at the end o' the thorn, but there was a lot o' venemous stuff along it wot 'urt. Well, it do 'urt. I 'ad my 'and bad for nineteen weeks after one stab. Fut wot I don't like about the jacket is its rotten 'abit of eatin' lines. I 'ad a English bloke with me once down near Jervis Bay on a fishin' trip, an' 'e wouldn't believe me when I told 'im the jacket'd eat lines. 'E believes now. 'E dropped a beautiful silk platted line down for snapper, with three 'ooks on, an' brung it up with orl the 'ooks an' the sinker gone first pop, an' 'e'd 'ad fish on. They was jackets 'e 'ad on, o' course. 'E fixed up again, an' was 'orlin' a fish up, w'en 'e seen a jacket bite 'is line about three foot below the surface o' the water. 'Did yer see that?' 'e says. 'Yes,' I says; 'wot did

I tell yer? I noo wot was goin' ter 'appen.' Then 'e says a lot o' them science words o' Geordie's— orful."

There was a general laugh at Geordie's expense.

"Why do the fish do it?" asked someone.

"They do it ter get little scraps o' bait orfer the line," replied the ancient. "No one thinks o' lookin' at every inch o' line 'e drops in ter see if any bits o' bait is stickin' to it; but the jacket don't count it any trouble. Yer can see 'em squintin' along the line sometimes. I believe myself it eats the line w'en the flavor o' tucker is about it. There was a crowd o' 'ard-workin' blokes from the Justis' Department down orfer the John Young Banks a coupler years back, an' the jackets introjooiced theirselves. Yer'll 'ardly believe me, but they cleared them blokes outer lines, an' they 'ad about two quids' worth each. Blowed if they didn't 'ave ter cut their trip short becos their lines was orl eat."

"Tough!" ejaculated Mick Moran, the wood and coal merchant.

"Wot?" asked Joe, angrily.

"Oh, I don't mane you," replied Mick; "I was referrin' to the lither-jacket."

"Oh yes," said Joe. "They've got a 'ide on 'em like yerself. Rough an' tough. But yer can peel it orf em like a orange peel. One cut behind the 'ead an' tear it orf, an' yer can then get 'old o' the skin an' pull it orf in one tick. Dirty feeders is jackets, too, but that don't 'urt the flesh much. Consciences they ain't got at orl w'en food's about. Yer might ketch one fatter'n orl the others in the same shoal, an' wonder why 'e is fat. It's simple enough. 'E's got a patch of 'is own somewhere behind a rock an' 'e keeps it to 'imself. There ain't nothin' wot a jacket won't eat. 'E's like a Surry 'lls billy-goat in that respeck. Yer get 'em near where they tips the orfal from the slaughter-yards,

close ter Sydney 'Eads, an' yer get 'em down in the clean, deep water round the Shoal'aven Bight. In fact, there ain't 'ardly nowhere where yer don't get 'em along the coast; but I know 'ow to dodge 'em in some places now."

"We fishermen are getting a bad time," remarked a beginner, "with catfish and leather-jackets."

"'Ear 'im!" shouted Joe. "'We fishermen,' indeed! Speak for yerself, young 'un. You won't never be able ter ketch fish, not as long as ye've got a gash in yer face ter chuck food in."

"Well, how do you get rid of them, anyhow?" asked the beginner, truculently.

"Well, w'en I'm brimmin', an' the jackets come about," said Joe, "I outs with a light twist an' a fly 'ook on fine wire. Wire surprises 'em till they get ter know it. They they play the scissors game on it, the same's on string. I ketch a coupler the brutes an' loosen a bit o' their 'ide with a knife, an' turn 'em loose. They swim away same as usual. Lumme! They'd swim if they was cut in 'alves. But the rest o' their relations, gettin' a sniff o' raw meat, want ter sail in an' sample it. They chase their brother till 'e sweats an' gives in. Then they 'appy despatch 'im."

"Regular cannibals," remarked George.

"Yes, Geordie," replied Joe; "brim won't eat brim, perch won't eat perch, but flat'ead 'll eat flat'ead, an' jackets 'll eat jackets. I know the 'abits of 'em. I 'aven't been fifty years fishin' round 'ere without learnin' things. Yer needn't think it's my crook eye wot makes me lucky at fishin'. It's brains."

"Fed on whales when he was young," remarked a scoffer, a bank cadet.

"You're a liar!" snapped Joe. "W'en I was four I used ter grub in the fish-market while my old man bought 'is whack o' fish ter sell. I eat fish, not whales. Eatin' fish makes brains. If

you'd been fed on a bit more mullet yer wouldn't be workin' for twenty-five bob a week."

"Never mind him," chipped in George, pouring the oil of peace on a scene that had in it insurrectionary elements. "Go on about the leather-jacket."

"Them wot don't believe me," continued Joe, sadly, "can go outside an' get filled up with lies by blokes wot can't speak the truth. I'm no liar, Geordie, am I?"

"Of course not, Joe," and there was a murmured chorus of approval, which made the old man brighten up.

"Pretty as water-color pickshers, some o' the jackets," said the old man. "I believe they 'ave a paintin' room o' some sort down in the cellar. Orl the colors o' the rainbow is on their sides, but the colors dies out as the fish pegs out. I watched one about nineteen pounds' weight chuckin' a seven one time, an' the way them colors flickered out was beyond my reckonin'. Couldn't account for it no 'ow. Talk about a dyin' dolphin—it isn't in it with a dyin' rainbow jacket. I skinned it fer ter see if the color was in the skin, an' gev it ter the museum Johnny ter see if 'e could find out 'ow the colors was fixed in, but 'e couldn't find none after I'd peeled the fish. Some says it's the refleckshuns o' the sunsets, but that's orl garden stuff. Other jackets is only a dirt color, an' there's others wot's got no thorn on their 'eads. Them ones makes up fer it in teeth, though. I could tell yer lots about jackets if I 'ad time, but I've got a job' ringin' a bell fer a auckshoneer to-morrer, so I'll wish yer orl good night."

"Wait a bit," called Mick. "Ain't their skins any use?"

"Oh, yes," said Joe; "I forgot that. Their 'ides is useful for makin' boots. I've got a pair at 'ome I 'ad made about seven years ago, an' the uppers

is good yet. I'll wear 'em ter-morrer, so if yer come to the sale, I'll show 'em to yer."

"The owld father o' lies!" ejaculated Mick, as the old man turned the corner.

FISHERMEN'S LUCK.

Goliath Joe was no believer in luck at fishing, while he held equally strong convictions that there were such personages as Jonahs. Goliath held opposite views to a lot of us on matters piscatorial, and there were not wanting those who ascribed his peculiar views and his luck at fishing, which was at times phenomenal, to his possession of a fine swivel eye. Joe's left observer had been stuck in his head at a very severe angle, and on that account many of the sportsmen rather liked to avoid him when they were going fishing. Joe had his old friend George Brown, the returned Transvaal warrior, and a small coterie of anglers by the ear and the legs one evening while he discoursed concerning luck in connection with fishing.

"I never care when I'm goin' fishin'," remarked Joe, "about pickin' up an 'orseshoe just for luck's sake. O' course, I allus do pick it up. 'Orseshoe 'alves are a great shape for rock fishin' sinkers, an' yer need a lot o' them when yer fishin' over a 'ooky bottom. 'Sides, if yer lose 'em it don't matter much, seein' wot they cost. But some coves I've bin with wouldn't pass an 'orseshoe, an' wouldn't carry it with 'em. They'd just pick it up an' fire it over ther left shoulders fer luck. The last cove I was with wot done that 'it a Chinaman's 'orse in the eye, an' the Pat went ter market proper. I 'ad ter threaten ter 'it 'im on the 'ead with a snapper sinker before he'd quit maggin'."

"I've heard that some of the chaps will not go with you on account of your gozzle eye," said

George; "and that you always have astonishing luck at rock fishing."

"Them wot ses that don't know wot they're torkin' about," said Joe. "I can't 'elp my eye bein' a bit gozzled. I was jaggin' on Bondi Beach fer bucks one day——"

"What on earth are bucks?" quoth one of the fellows, who heard the word applied to a fish for the first time.

"Bondi salmon," replied Joe. "I thort everybody noo that. There was a cove near me watchin' me whirl the lead round my 'ead at the end o' ten yards o' line doubled, fer a big shot out, an' 'e yells, 'Er—excuse me, sir, but are you goin' ter throw where you're lookin'?' 'Yes,' I ses. I was lookin' out ter sea, but 'e thort I was lookin' at 'im. 'E didn't say anything else, but 'e runs behind me an' sticks 'is 'ead in the sand, leavin' 'is coat-tails flut-terin' in the breeze——"

"Ring off, Joe," says George; "I've heard this before."

"Yer 'aven't," said Joe. "Jest 'old yer brumbies a minute an' see. I could 'ardly sling out fer larfin', but I got out, as I allus do, lovely. But jest then another mug on the beach about fifty yards ter the right a' me, wot 'ad 'is lead tied on with a single strand, 'ad 'is sinker fly off like a bloomin' bullet, an' I'm blest if it didn't ketch this cove a wallopin' biff on the thick part. 'E jumps up like's 'f 'e was shot, an' lit out fer 'is bag. Then 'e comes back ter me an' 'e says, ery 'orty: 'You will 'ear more o' this,' an' cleared out. About twenty minutes after 'e comes back with a bobby I noo well—a beach fisherman the bobby was, an' not a bad 'un. The bobby noo me, too, as the most expertest thrower on the beach; so when the cove 'ad done 'is pitch, 'e ses, 'You are mistaken, sir. This gentleman, Mr. Joseph Smith, never done it. 'E couldn't throw crooked if 'e tried.' Jest then the cove wot

done it come up. 'E was one o' them amachoor blokes, but 'e owned up ter doin' it like a man. The two of 'em—the bloke wot got 'it an' the amachoor—seemed ter 'it it orl right, for some time after I seen 'em imbibin' something outter the amachoor's silver flask, an' they appeared ter be as soshable as young 'possums in the same pouch. I s'pose them coves reckoned my crook eye cruelled their luck, but the simple fact was, they was mugs, an' didn't study their game."

"But there seems to be luck in fishing more than in any other sport," said George.

"So some ses," replied Joe. "Some blokes is full o' fads about their luck goin' bad. One I noo of used ter tork erbout taking a talisman with 'im. I never seen this talisman. I s'pose it was a nigger lad ter put the prawns on the 'ooks an' take the fish orf fer 'im. One used ter carry three caps an' fish in different ones till the fish came round. Another used ter turn round an' go 'ome again if 'e met a gozzled-eyed woman on the way ter the fishin' spot; while others 'd only think she'd bring 'em luck. One cove reckoned 'e'd 'ave no luck if 'e left 'is old fishin' knife at 'ome—an old bleeder wot 'ad come down in the family."

"What about certain days, Joe?" asked the waiter, who had paused to hear a fragment of the talk.

"Nothin' in it," said Joe. "One day's the same as another ter the fish. Good Friday's the same as Easter Monday, if the wind's the same. O'course, I'll grant yer that sometimes ye'll see one good fisherman sittin' as stiff as a Jonah between two others wot's ketchin' 'em. But I've never experienced this sorter thing myself. Nothing 'd cruel my fishin'. But I fish, mind yer; the other coves fool about."

"Hold on, Joe," said George. "What about that time you were out with me at Woy Woy,

when Couche and I got all the fish, and you couldn't raise a scale?"

"I wasn't tryin' that day," said Joe. "You know very well I 'ad an 'eadache orl day. 'Sides, who wants ter ketch fiddlin' whitin' an' things like that? Gimme somethin' wot thumps, like a red 'un or a groper."

"Yes, büt you lost plenty of bait that day," persisted George.

"I didn't," said Joe, who never failed to bluff out with a plump lie when cornered. "Precious little chance I 'ad o' that when you kep' ther baits at your end o' the boat orl day. An' look 'ere, Geordie, you've got a irritatin' way o' chippin' in about something fresh. We was torkin' about luck. I'll give yer a list o' things some coves' superstitishuns about luck. One cove allus carries the 'ead jewel of a jewfish in 'is pocket or on 'is watch-chain; another 'as a fancy fer a partickler match-box. One, when e' opens 'is knife in the boat, never shuts it again till the fishin' is over; another can't ketch 'em when the lines is over the port side; an' yet another must allus sit on the stern seat. One can't ketch 'em becos 'e met a Chinkey on the way to the train, an' sometimes two of 'em can't do any good becos they've took a Jonah out with 'em.

"I don't believe in luck at fishin'—mine's allus the cne way—but I'm a firm believer in Jonahs. That old Jonah wot did solitary inside a whale long ago must 'a left some o' 'is family round. I could tell yer plenty about Jonahs o' orl sorts; in fact, I could rite a essay on 'em if I was arsked——"

"Luck's the subject," reminded George, getting square with the ancient for his last smack at him.

"I know wot I'm prattin' about," said Joe. "I'll tell yer exactly wot luck is at fishin'. It's a feelin' inside yer that yer can ketch fish; it's knowin' where ter fish, an' 'ow the diff'rent fish bite an' pull; it's knowin' wot their seasons is, an' wot's the best bait

for 'em; it's knowin' wot the bottom o' the river, lake, 'arbor, or ocean is like, the same as yer know the top of it; it's knowin' wot size 'ook ter use, an' the kinder line fer diff'rent occasions; it's 'avin' a brim finger on each 'and; it's studyin' tides an' current an' weather, an' it's tryin' orl the time.

"There's nothin' else in it, an' it's becos I'm one wot does orl these things that I ketch 'em. You tell that ter them Amachoor Fishin' Sosashun blokes wot thinks they know everything."

THE JEWFISH AND BIG BEN.

The talk that night had run upon jewfish. Geo. Brown, the returned contingenter, who was always the most sympathetic of old Goliath Joe's auditors, had been having a day at the fish in the Hawkesbury River.

It was to George that the old fisherman always looked for stimulation, both mental and stomachic, as well as for credulity.

George was not altogether devoid of hypocrisy in his kindly treatment of the old fellow, and there were some who said that his chief object in drawing the old one out was so that he might be able to retail his stories to some chap connected with the newspapers. However, that's getting too far behind the scenes.

Goliath succeeded in maintaining the floor easily when he got a few words in. He had a raucous voice, which had gained its carrying capacity through many days' practice yelling to companions at the bottom of a cliff when the orator was at the top of it.

"Didn't yer know about that jewy o' mine?" said Joe. "Why, I thought everybody noo about my big jewy. Oh, I remember, ye've bin away this last three year. Well, me an' Jack Morris an' Bill 'Innes got down Tumbledown Rocks out near Ben Buckley with the ropes one day. Ye've bin there, haven't yer, Geord?"

"Yes," said Geordie; "went down it with two ropes with Gus and George Blundolf."

"Well, you know what it is," said Joe. "The bottom climb's a fair caution, ain't it? Jack was a bit orf fer climbin' that day, but we got down orl segarnio, an' threw our lines inter Buckley side o' the water. It was a good place, as yer know, for drummer, groper, carp, an' other fish what feeds on weedy bottoms, an' often we managed ter 'it the red 'uns. Well, pretty soon I 'ad the loveliest pair o' schnapper I ever seen. Seemed like 's 'f they'd bin cut outer the same mould. They was as like as two peas, an' rather dark in color. One weighed nineteen pounds an' the other nineteen pounds an' a bream sinker. Bill copped a coupler groper an' two squire, an' Jack lugged in a wirrah an' two eels, an' 'ooked ther foundation-stone of Australia every third shot out. I tell yer 'e was usin' langwidge. We fished as it might be like this. You there'd be Bill, I'm here, an' the pewter pot o' beer is Jack."

"I see," broke in George, "Jack had the worst side."

"Yes," said Joe. "We allus put Jack over the crookedest bottom 'cause 'e was such a Jonah. Ther was nothin' in lettin' 'im 'ave the good side ter cruel our luck. I remember it like's 'f it was yestiddy. I was wearin' a 'at like yours, on'y more slouchy, an' comin' up more to a point. Yer ain't got a pipeful about yer, Geord, 'ave yer? It ain't as big as it looks," he added as he knocked the ashes out of a great German pipe with a bowl as large as a mug.

Joe's pipe was a standing joke amongst the chaps. Its full capacity was more than an ounce of "cut up," but someone had put Geordie up to it, for he handed Goliath a cigar that had been given to him by a brewer's commercial traveller that morning. The cigar was one of the usual sort the beer men carry by the pocketful after having visited twenty different hotels on pay day. Joe took it and lit it,

but made no direct complaint, although he spat rather much.

"Thanks, Geord," he said at last. "It ain't bin mellered long enough, but it's pretty fair."

"That's all right," said Geordie, "pitch in about the jewy."

"Oh, yes," said Joe. "I was nearly forgettin'. A smoke like this'd make a man lose 'is memory if 'e wasn't seasoned. But about ther jewy. Yes! We got some more fish I needn't bother about, a trifle er bream, darkies, yer know, one goin' seven pounds, an', as things was gettin' a bit slow, I ses ter Bill, I ses: 'Wot say if we try Big Ben?'"

"Who was Big Ben?" queried the marker; "I thought you said there was on'y three of you."

"Big Ben wasn't anybody," said Joe, with a chuckle. "It was a sorter pet name we 'ad fer a thick line we owned between us. A 36-cord, tan, it was, an' over a quarter of a hinch thick. We'd never tried it up ter that time on a fish; it was sech hard graft gettin' it out orf ther rocks. 'Righto!' ses Bill. So I puts on a 'ole mullet on a number twelve nort 'ook, with four railway bolts an' 'alf an 'orseshoe for sinkers."

"Horseshoe for luck?" quoth George.

"No, fer cheapness, sonny, lead's too dear," said Joe. "Well, Ben sailed out lovely, about 59 yards as near as I could judge, an' I lets ther line run ter the bottom orl coosh. Then I sits down an' I gives it a turn round my toe like this an' I starts ter put a double snooze on an 'ook—so—an' I was jest twistin' it up when Ben gives my toe a wrench wot nearly pulled it orf."

"Down I goes onter it, an' jest got it in time ter save myself gettin' pulled out."

"Away she went, whiz—br-r-r-r—'struth, it fair whistled out ter a full 99 yards. 'Lumme, it's a big ground shark!' I ses ter the boys, 'cause 'e took it so steady like. Thanks, I don't mind if I

do," Joe broke off to say to someone who asked him what he'd plead guilty to in the way of refreshment. "A little more in the pewter fer me," and then he went on.

"I soon seen it wasn't a shark, 'cause it riz near the top, an' was too sheer a run. Then, when I puts the strain on, the fish gev a lip up in the air. 'It's a porpus!' ses Bill. But it wasn't a porpus, although at the time I'll own up I was dumbef if I noo exactly wot ter call it myself.

"Well, I 'ad that fish goin' fer full a 'alf or maybe three-quarters of a 'our, me racin' from one sider the rock ter the other till I was fair done. Jack an' Bill pulled in ter give me a clear go at it.

"Well, ter make a long story short, I ses at last to the boys: 'Let's fetch 'er, break er no break,' I ses. With that we laid back, the three of us, an' we fair lugged until we could pretty near see inside our own 'eads. Scratch pullin' was nothin' to it. 'We'll draw 'is front teeth, anny'ow,' I ses, 'if 'e don't come.' Ben 'eld orl right—Ben woulder 'eld a elephant—but I was afraid fer the 'ook. 'Owever, everything 'eld, an' we got the fish in hinch by hinch, until we got a fair sight of 'im. Send I may live, Geordy, 'e was the biggest jewy I ever seen!"

"Two hundred?" queried Geordie, laconically.

"Well, without a word of a lie, Geordie," said Joe, "it was three foot taller'n me, an' I'm five-foot-ten. Two 'undred, did yer say? Well, we never weighed it, 'cause we couldn't take it up ther rocks, but I'm a bit of a judge er weights er fish, an' I reckon it went orl out 829 pounds, a 'undred over one o' Micky Moran's 'alf tons a wood."

Mick Moran, the purveyor of coal and wood, had been grinning largely up to that stage, but the grin went out like as if it had suffered an eclipse, because Joe sometimes worked for him, and knew things.

"We 'ad orl our work cut out ter lift it clear

out," continued Joe, "but one of 'em got it by the gills with a shark 'ook on a chain, an' we skull-dragged it over the edge. By gosh, Geordie, it was a paralizer!"

"What did you do with it?" asked George.

"Wot could we do with it?" returned Joe. "Yer might as well 'a' tried ter eat raw 'orse as eat that jewy. We jest 'ad ter tip it in again, an' jest as it flopped in a wave smacked it up agen a rock an' we 'eard its skull crack, Geordie. Then it floated out belly up'ards. We 'eard after that one o' ther Noo Zealand boats 'ad reported sightin' a himmense fish like a small whale orf Bondi. Fancy callin' a jewfish a whale; but it on'y shows wot liars them shippin' coves are. Any'ow, if they'd picked it up they'd 'a' 'ad enough fresh fish ter last them a fortnight. There's on'y one thing I regret in ther 'ole thing. I was so egzited with the work er catchin' the monster that I clean forgot about takin' out its 'ead jewels. I could a got a quid each fer them jewels."

It was about this stage that Joe began to repeat himself.

"I remember it orl like's 'f it was yesterday," he said. "I'm the empty pewter 'ere—ahem—Bill was there, an' Jack on the bad patch."

But no one responded.

"Me, with my 'at, just like yours, Geordie, on'y more pointeder an' slouchier. I'm the empty pewter——"

But just then the eleven o'clock chimes rang out, and there was a general exodus, so that Joe's last words found only the toughest ears left. Then Joe had one with the flies and went home.

CONFAB WITH A BLUE GROPER.

Whoever it was had given Joe Smith the name of Goliath, he had certainly hit the mark, for verily Joe's yarns were as strong as one could well imagine. Joe was as happy as a school shark when he had the ear of a sympathetic listener, and this evening he had poor George Brown, who had just returned from the war with an injured leg, and could not run away from him, even if he wanted to, in a corner of the billiard-room. One or two of us stood by in case George might suddenly yell for brandy, and this is what we heard:—

"Did I ever tell yer about the seventy-pound blue groper I 'ad a long talk with down Bluefish rocks, Geordie?"

"No," said George.

"Well, it's a wonder I never told yer that before yer went shootin' Huns," said Goliath Joe. "I oughter tell yer about 'im. 'E was a real old 'ummer that blue groper, Geordie. When 'e grinned yer could see 'is old gums with jest a few scattered grinders stuck in 'ere and there all green and worn. I'd 'ung a bait er crab and cunjeboy out fer 'im time and again, an' 'ooked 'im several times without ever landin' 'im. Lumme! 'e was too swift a jigger fer me, an' 'e noo more tricks than a wharf rat. Twicet 'e beat me with a fair run out ter sea, takin' best part of a snapper line with 'im each time, an' more than twice I brought 'im to the top, an' 'e spun 'is 'ead and shoulders round an' cracked

a ten-ho 'ook like a carrot. 'E'd jest give a asmatic kind of a cough on the top of the water an' go 'ome.

"Other times when I 'ooked 'im 'e'd stick 'is bloomin' old 'ead in an 'ole an' saw the line, an' I might as well a tried to pull the Town 'All over as shift 'im. So at last I gev up tryin' to ketch 'im, an' fell to chuckin' in lumps er cunjy for 'im to eat. 'E took to it very kind indeed, an' one calm, still evenin' e' poked 'is 'ead out with a bit er cunjy 'e was munchin' stickin' outer the corner of 'is mouth, an' ses 'Ooffa,' like a cove with asma."

"Have a gargle, Joe?" interposed George.

"Thanks, Geordie," said Joe. "Rum, miss."

"Go on, Joe, while it's coming," said George.

"Then this 'ere Bluey," continued Joe, "gev an' other cough an' grinned at me an' disappeared. 'That's good,' I ses to myself; 'the other coves'll never believe that.' 'E 'ad a seaweedy kind o' voice, Geordie, but while I was thinkin' about it an' starin' at the place where 'is old blue nadget 'ad been, 'e popped up again. I got in before 'im this time, an' in a jokin' kind o' way I ses: 'Good evenin', Bluey.' 'Oh, good evenin',' 'e ses, an' by gum 'e startled me. 'Gave up tryin' to ketch me, ain't yer, Joe?' 'e ses. 'Ooffa! Ooffa! Terrible cough I've got.' 'Yes,' I ses, 'you know too much for me,' I ses. 'About time yer chucked it,' 'e ses, 'You've torn my top lip an' pulled out several o' my best teeth with your tomfoolery, an' gev me the toothache fer weeks an' weeks. It's better fer you to give me a few lumps er cunjy occasionally so as ter save my other teeth bitin' 'em off the rocks, much better. Lucky for you, too. One o' these evenin's I'd a 'ad you in 'ere fer your unkindness,' 'e ses. 'Well, I'm very sorry, Bluey,' I ses, 'but 'ow was I ter know it was you bitin'?' 'You noo well enough,' 'e ses, an' 'e was right. I noo every time, Geordie. 'Little more,' 'e ses, an'

I'd lost my temper an' got Jemmy Octopuss ter take the law inter 'is own 'ands as 'e wanted to. You tore one of 'is feelers something awful one day, an' 'e was going ter reach out for you an' pull yer in that evenin' on'y fer me. 'E can git out an' inter the water quicker'n you think, an' 'e's 'ad extra-animosical feelin's ter you ever since you injured four o' the best buttons on his number seven feeler.' 'Tell 'im I apologise,' I ses, 'an' I won't do it no more,' I ses. 'All right,' 'e ses, 'on'y you chuck in plenty o' cunjy an' crabs fer me, an' ketch some more o' them enemies of 'is, them conger eels—they've been givin' 'im a anxious time lately.' 'I promise,' I ses. Not that I was frightened, Geordie, but it tickled me like anything to 'ear a old groper cackle. 'I suppose yer think yer a wise lot up there?' ses old Bluey, 'but I've been round into Sydney 'Arbor many a time, an' I've seen an' 'eard things that prove to me yer a sick lot,' 'e ses. 'I've 'eard a lot from coves in boats at the Green Flats, too. They're a sultry lot them black brimmers. It's the blue yarns they tell what's druv the black brim away from there. It's on'y a low set o' unmoralised scrowshers like the sweep an' kelpies an' wirrahs what'd stop near their boats. The brim are modest fish, an' next ter groper been well brought up. As to common cod sense regardin' catchin' fish, I've come ter the conclusion that you are defishent.' Straight wire, 'e did, Geordie, an' 'e winked at me as 'e said it. 'Yes,' 'e ses, 'I could teach you a few things if you lived with me for a spell, Joe.' 'Thanks,' I ses, 'I'd rather take it this way,' I ses. I wanted ter say something to propishiate the old cove, Geordie, but I didn't quite know 'ow to put it. 'Yer such a strong old joker on the flute,' I ses to 'im; 'you'd make a good livin' spoutin' in the Domain,' I ses, 'on Sundays.' 'Would I?' 'e ses; 'I'll meet yer round there some night when they git it lit with electric light, an'

not before,' 'e ses; 'I can't go there in the day time,' 'e ses, 'an' I've a character to lose. You've been a rock-'opper all yer life, Joe, an' I've 'ad many opportunities o' studyin' you, an' I've found yer ter be a 'onest, straightforward, if somewhat thirsty, bloke,' 'e ses, 'not givin' to stretchin' the truth,' 'e ses.

"Fill them up again," said George, "while you catch your breath, Joe." To give George his due, he could take a hint as quickly as any one.

"Yes," continued Joe—"an no liar"—ses Bluey, 'an' that's why I've been talkin' to you so long.' Straight, 'e did, George, an' I wondered 'ow 'e could a 'it off my character so well. I tell yer I looked 'ard at 'im to see if 'e wasn't kiddin' me, but 'e didn't twitch along 'is dorsals. When a fish is lyin' he twitches like a kid; but I'd bet a silk twist to a bit o' cotton that Bluey didn't twitch a spine."

"Don't you think you must have gone to sleep and dreamt all this, Joe?" said Geordie.

"What!" said Joe. "Drempt it! Me! Well, Geordie, you're the most disappointinest feller I ever talked to. I never drempt it. Why, you'll say next that I drempt I got a big knock on my snapper line just then, as I did, an' I struck an' 'ooked a bosker. Old Bluey watched me land it—a nineteen pound snapper it was, Geordie. When I'd landed it the old cove ses to me, 'You stick ter them fish an' eels, Joe, an' neither me nor octopusses nor squids 'll ever 'urt yer, ooffa! ooffa!' an' then 'e got a twist o' the asma an' fell ter coughin' like a old cow, an' got 'is air bladder full o' water, an' 'ad ter go down. Since then I've met 'im several times, an' 'e's gev me some useful information, but on the strict cue-tee, mind yer, George. I'll tell you something in confidence. People think it's my crook eye, or sheer blank luck, what makes me ketch so many fish, but the truth is, Geordie (here Joe lowered his voice to a whisper), a lot of it's 'ints

from old Bluey, an' the rest I was born with, an' don't you forget it. An' look 'ere, Geordie, I don't like fellers what disbelieve me. Some time when you stop alone on Bluefish Rocks at Manly in the evenin', you'll 'ear a sound arf like a cow with the croup an' arf like a gas lift engin'. That'll be Bluey coughin', but I don't suppose 'e'll talk to you like 'e does to me."

BERLEY IN THE TRAIN.

"One day," said Joe Smith, musingly, as he shifted his angles into the corner of the couch in the billiard room that had come to be regarded as his by right of undisputed occupancy for more years than some of the oldest of us cared to remember, "one day I 'eard a feller use two good words wot would 'ave been more suitable used by that cove over there who jest got rounded on for swearin'."

A few minutes before one of the men in charge of the workmen's club had remonstrated with a member for saying that he "hated carrying bags of bone-dust qualitatively 'orrible."

"Wot that cove should 'ave said," continued the old man, whose soubriquet of Goliath had clung to him like a garment ever since he had begun to tell fishing stories, "was that 'e 'ad a unconquerable avershun to stinkin' bone-dust. Them words stuck ter me wen I fust 'eard 'em, an' 'they meant a bloomin' lot ter the cove wot used 'em. They sound quite as good as swearin', any'ow, if yer say 'em 'ot like. I confess I didn't know wot the bloke meant at fust, but I got my dorter who's a pupil-teacher ter tell me."

"What have you got an unconquerable aversion to, Joe?" asked one of the men.

"Water," promptly replied the old man. "Water orl the time, ever since I learned the taste o' better things. Water neerly cooked me onct drinkin' it raw. I 'ad entrick fever 19 weeks in an 'orspital

through it. It's good stuff ter swim fishes in, or clean winders with, or wash clothes in, but on its own fer inside application it's dead crook."

Joe's harangue against water was so obviously a hint to the last speaker that something other than water would please his palate, that the man asked Joe to name his.

"I can't say I ain't thirsty," returned the ancient fisherman, graciously, "so I'll 'ave one with yer, Bill."

After the drink the old fellow's tongue went faster than ever. In truth his creel of reminiscences seemed inexhaustible whenever he got on the congenial subject of fishing.

"My missus 'as got 'old of them words, 'unconquerable avershun,'" he said, with a chuckle, "an' in that silly way women's got, she chucks 'em at me more frekwent than I like. She says that I 'ave a unconquerable avershun ter work."

"Well, I've known Joe to pull ten miles to fish before breakfast," said George Brown; "so she's wrong."

"That's wot I points out to 'er," returned Goliath. "But she says that's play. O' course, now I get the old age penshun an' the family sends me a bit, I get on orl right; but I ain't above work, am I, Geord? I was ringin' a auckshuneer's bell for two hours yestiddy, an' earned 'alf-a-caser."

All the men exchanged looks of wondering approval that pleased the old man mightily.

"I can allus get square on the missus, though," he said. "She's got a dead nark on berley."

"So has my wife, bedad!" remarked Micky Moran, the wood and coal merchant.

"Mine, too," added Frank Bardner, the watchmaker.

"My mother and sisters can't stand it either," said George Brown.

"Seems ter be a orl round female failin'," cogitat-

ed the ancient, as he surveyed the party over the rim of his spectacles. "I don't mind it myself, but I've seen people wot did—men, too, an' that's 'ow I came ter hear that expresshun. I 'ad some lovely berley as meller as any brimmer could wish once in my bag, goin' ter Port Hackin'. I 'ad it in the carriage with me. I'd have put it in the guard's van on'y the last time I done that the guard told me I 'orter 'ave waited fer the funeral train, an' 'e tipped my bloomin' bag o' berley out on the metals wen 'e located it. Nasty bloke 'e was."

"Just like a railway guard," remarked one of the men. "You should have tipped him beforehand."

"Not me," replied the old man; "the berley was on'y worth about sixpence in achshal cash, an' 'e'd on'y sneered at a threepenny bit. I took no chances this time, so I lugged it inter the carridge with me. I got into a bloomin' row, too, but it was orl Geordie's fault. Charlie Woden an' Archie Bingle was goin' fishin' with us, an' they guessed it was my berley wot was smellin' five minutes after we got started. Pretty soon Charlie says, 'I'm not feelin' too well this mornin', chaps, so I'll get out an' travel in the next carridge. I think somebody's tied a dead dog ter the axle o' this car.' He got into the next car at the next station, an' Archie follyed 'im at the next. Lumme, that stuff did begin ter smell powerful. There was a pretty young lady in the carridge with us, an' she kept smilin' right through. I've allus beleaved since then, that young, good-lookin' women was the right kinder wives fer fishermen. It was a pipin' 'ot day, an' that berley was reel good. Every mile we went it mellered. It'd jest naturally fetch fish outer the water ter get it. One cove in the carridge before Charlie an' Arch got out said it was a shame the 'Ealth Board neglected its dooties. He thort it was the station wot smelt. Then 'e discovered it was in the carridge, an' 'e tried ter find it. 'E got down on 'is

knees rootin' erbout the seats, an' I never said a word. Then Geordie goes an' puts both 'is bloomin' 'oofs inter it, an' mine, too, by sayin' ter me, 'Yer'd better 'ang that berley on the door 'andle outside, Joe.' "

"I couldn't help it," returned George, laughing. "It was the girl I pitied. The man didn't trouble me. Anyway, we were getting near Loftus Junction, so it didn't matter much."

"Didn't it!" retorted the old man. "O' course, wen I 'ung the bag on the door 'andle they orl knew it was it. There was a cove two windows further down the train lookin' out at the scenery wen the smell 'it 'im fair in the face. 'E fell inside as if 'e was shot. I kep' lookin' out, cause I didn't wanter get arguin' with the bloke inside. I could 'ear 'im surgin'. Presently the cove down further sticks 'is 'ead outer the window again with a 'andkercher ter 'is face. 'Wot yer got there?' 'e says. 'Berley,' I says. 'Berley!' 'e says; 'that's a new kinder animal. Why didn't yer bury it in Sydney? Yer better throw it away before it falls ter pieces?' 'It's orl right,' I says. 'It's not too bad,' an' I shook it up a bit. 'E went inside quick, an' I 'eard no more o' 'im. There was a lot o' loud talk goin' on be'ind me in the car, an' I could ketch a word from Geordie now an' then."

"Yes," said George, "I'd have been into a big row with that chap in another second only I pulled you in by the coat tail."

"It was dashed mean," returned Goliath. "The fun begun then, chaps, I can tell yer. The cove was neerly appepleck with temper. 'It's agin the law,' 'e says, 'ter bring annything obnockshus inter a railway carridge, an' I'll 'ave yer removed at the next station. If there's anything in the world I've a unconkerable avershun ter its rotten fish,' 'e says. 'Get out,' I says, 'yer silly old goat; it's nothin' but bran, an' pollard, an' stale 'errins mixed up.'

'Yer orter be made ter eat it,' 'e says. 'That's orl right, but it's a food fer fishes,' I says. I noo we was on a bad wicket, an' 'ad ter bat steady. Between us we bluffed 'im till we got ter where we was gettin' out.

"When the train pulled up at Loftus Junction we dove out quick. While I was standin' on the platform the noisy bloke inside kep' tick-tackin' at me about the smell. I stood near the door w'ile 'e yapped at the winder. 'A good job yer got out,' 'e says. 'I'd 'a put yer out in another minute.' 'E stuck 'is 'ead out too far ter say that, cos I pushed 'im 'ard on the nose with the bag o' berley, an' 'e fell down inside the carriage. The train was orf before 'e could get up."

Somebody suggested that it was a long time between drinks, and Joe acquiesced with uncommon alacrity.

"I set orf full sail fer the port," he said, when he had quaffed. "Geordie an' Arch an' Charlie come on behind. Suddenly Charlie yells out ter me ter 'old on. 'Yer don't mind walkin' a bit ter the rear, do yer?' 'e says. 'That bag's givin' us a blast like outer the 'old of a guanner ship,' 'e says. 'Ave you got a unconkerable avershun ter it, Charlie?' I says. 'Yes,' 'e says; 'the smell of it in the carriage nearly split me gizzard in 'arves.' Seein' 'ow it was, I walked so the wind blew from them onter me. A old 'orse comin' erlong in a trap be'ind me jibbed till we got outer range, so I expect 'e 'ad the same feelin's as Charlie an' the bloke in the train, an' the on'y way 'e could express 'em was by proppin'."

"What was the berley, Joe?" asked one of the men.

"Well, ter tell yer the truth, boys," replied the old man, "it was a bit stronger'n usual. There was bran an' pollard an' stale 'errins in it, but I added a few stale prorns, an' it was them wot buz-

zed. But I can tell yer as a berley ter get fish ter come round, it spoke fer itself."

"It certainly hummed all the while," remarked George Brown. "It was the rottenest stuff I ever smelt, but Joe made us all pay our whack for it. None of us used it but Joe, on account of the smell."

"No matter, yer 'ad the benefit of it," returned the old man. "Didn't the fish come erbout good that day, now?"

"Yes," replied George, "but we all had to pay you sixpence each for it, you old scamp."

"Yer can't please some coves no 'ow," said the old man as he went out. "Fishermen wot can't stand a little bit o' odor ort ter be kep' in a eau-de-colone factory. But, take my tip, if yer want ter send a woman orf 'er feed, make berley in the 'ouse."

HIS BAIT DOG.

"I see you are advertising for a lost dog, Joe," quoth Dave Wallace one evening to the old fisherman, as he was sitting in his corner of the couch. Nobody dreamed that the dog had anything to do with fishing.

"Offering no less than £5 reward for it, too," said one of the men. "Are you going to pay it all at once, Joe?"

"You find that dawg, young Belton," returned the old man, heatedly, "an' you'll git five as lovely golden quid in yer 'and as ever yer embezzled from yer bank."

Belton was a clerk in the head office of the Cosmopolitan, and after that nasty tongue jolt he subsided.

"The only dog I ever saw at Joe's place was a vigorous cross between a dingo and a dachshund—a large, immoral, sneaking, ill-tempered brute, with a long body and a snout for 'bottle-ohs,'" said George Brown, the old man's favorite companion on fishing excursions. "But I thought it belonged to his wife exclusively. It tore the seat out of the trousers of three itinerant bottle-gatherers in the first week Joe had it."

"That was the dawg wot got lost," remarked the old man, as he wiped his eye ostentatiously, "an' that was the on'y good 'e ever was except fer fishin'. I useter call 'im my bait dawg, 'cos I'd used a bit of 'is tail wot 'ad been cut orf by a

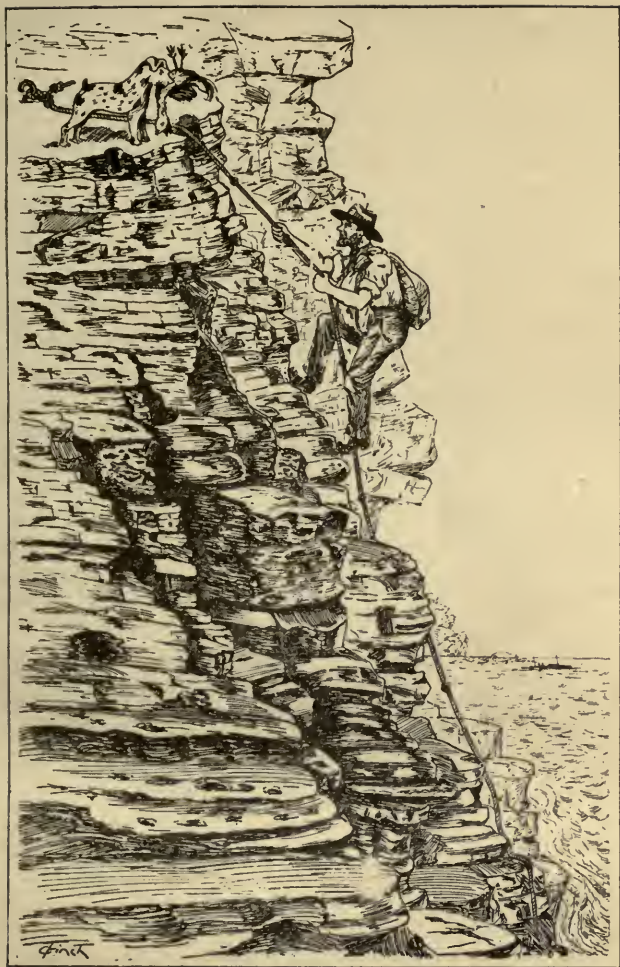
chaff-cutter e' got foolin' with, ter ketch four eels one night in the Centennyal Park lagoons. I tried ter get a bit more orf 'im one day wen I 'ad 'im out fishin' with me, an' 'ad run outer bait, but the dashed cur bit me. 'E didn't seem ter like goin' out with me after that, an' got so flamin' nasty that 'e'd snarl wenever I roused on the missus."

"Shouldn't think you'd be sorry to lose him," said Belton, who had recovered his equanimity.

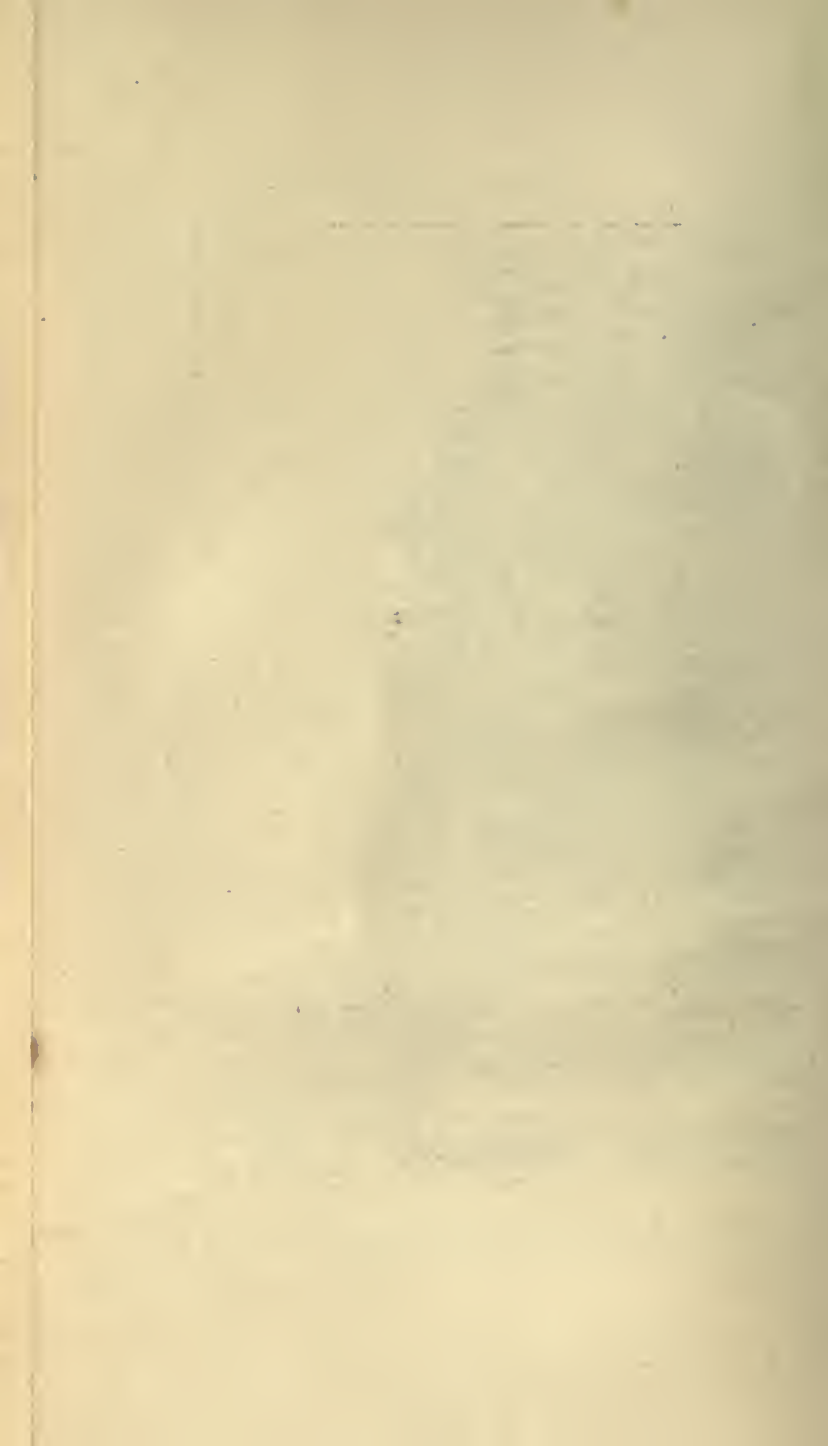
"No," returned the old man, as he reached out his foot and hooked the spittoon nearer, "but then no one would expect yer ter 'ave a ounce o' sympathy. 'E was a good dawg once, was Towser, an' I think 'e useter come out with me ter pick up wrinkles erbout fishin' like some o' the mugs I go out with does. They pay orl expenses, an' I teach 'em, but o' course, if they turn outer be pests I teach 'em backwards. Towser learned a bit easy. 'E useter fish with 'is two paws tryin' ter do it same as me, an' ter be 'onest, 'e useter get less tangles than lots o' coves I've 'ad out. When a big 'un took 'old, he never stood on the seat or anything like that, an' 'e soon learned not ter get jaggin' and prickin' the fish wen the brim come erbout. Wen 'e got a big 'un on, 'e'd jest jam the line agin the side o' the boat with 'is shoulder fer a bit of a check. 'E played some boskers that way till I could get 'old o' the line. 'E learned a lot watchin' me, too, wen a big jewy'd take an fling itself on my 'ook, I didn't believe in lettin' a dawg know everything, but o' course I 'ad ter extend myself sometimes whether I wantter ter or not. You needn't soshiate my good fishin' with my gozzle eye, any o' yers."

Joe had a pronounced squint in one eye, and some of the men had insinuated at times that his possession of the crooked optic was the reason for his extraordinary success at fishing.

"I expect it's the wife who has made you advertise," said George Brown.



"I'D FIND THE DOG AT THE TOP OF THE CLIFFS
WITH A CHUCKIE PLUCKED."



The old man shuffled a little, and then admitted that this was the case.

"Ugliest dawg I ever found," he said presently. "I remember the first time I took 'im out fishin' at the Orkesbury, wen 'im an' me was friends. Blow me if a catty didn't faint wen I lifted it in, dreckly it cort sight of 'is ugly gob, an' a catty ain't easy frightened. 'E got stabbed on the foot by a catty another day, an' e' blamed that onter me as well as fer tryin' ter splishe the bit orf 'is bloomin' wag-ger."

There was a ripple of amusement from the knot of listeners.

"Some dogs never forgive," remarked George, with a twinkle in his eye. And I'm blessed if I don't think they've got sense in that, too."

"My troubles erbout meself!" said Goliath. "I could always give 'im a flamin' good kick in the ribs wen 'e come foolin' round me. It was the dawg's tricks 'e got up ter that annoyed me. Yer'd 'ardly believe it, but that dawg useter get down on my bait after that. I never tumbled to it fer a long time. Prawns, bung, squid, mullet, orl except cungy! 'E drew the line at that. I useter blame the cat, but she went away suddent an' got lost, an' still the bait went. I found at last 'oo was ter blame by puttin' some ippecagoanner on some preserved prawns an' rollin' them in paper an' puttin' them at the bottom of my fishin' bag. That dawg pushed a chair under the nail the bag was 'angin' on, undid the buckle, an' eat them prawns. By gum! they fetched the thief, an' 'o course, from that out it was a dead sure thing 'e'd get lost. My trouble was 'ow ter do it. That flamin' dawg was too cunnin' for me every time."

"Well, why in the name of all that's wonderful did you advertise for him?" asked a listener.

"Ter oblige the missus," returned the old man.

"'Sides, I wanter keep unjust spishuns orfer me. I never lost 'im."

"You old hypocrite," broke in George Brown.

"Now, Geordie, I didn't expect that from you," said the old fisherman. "S'welp me Jemmy Johnson, I never touched the dawg!"

"Pretty safe reward!" said Belton.

"You'd look pretty if he turned up having to shell out a fiver," remarked Wilton, of the Lands, who had come in late. "It would swamp a month's draft of your old-age pension."

The ancient grinned.

"I'll come up with the spones if 'e's found," he replied. "I think 'e's disappeared fer good, an' talkin' serious, I think 'e chucked a seven out near Ben Buckler fishin' rock. Wen 'e was respectable, an' 'im an' me useter go out there fishin', 'e useter run ahead o' me an' collar young fat roosters from a poultry yard out that way. I'd find 'im at the top 'o the cliffs waitin' for me with a chuckie plucked orl but the pin feathers. I never arsked 'im where 'e got 'em, but cooked 'em wen we got down the ropes. 'E could climb the ropes well."

Someone volunteered the information that the dead body of some animal was beginning to advertise the fishing ground at Ben Buckler worse than a column of fishing news, but the truth of the matter came out when Joe's ancient enemy, Micky Moran, the wood and coal merchant, strolled in. Swords were always drawn between these two.

"Advertisin' his mongrel, is he?" said Micky. "It's himselluf knows it's no use at all, at all. Naw, that's roight," he said, in answer to George Brown. "He didn't kill the poor animal, but he wuz mor-rally reshponsible for his death. My lad wuz oaver on the cliffs fishin' and sure he seen it all."

"Micky," remarked Joe, suddenly, "will yer come an' 'ave a drink?"

The oldest members of the club were speechless. They heard with astonishment the extension of such an invitation by the old fisherman to Micky. It was a record incident, and some disappointment was manifested when Micky accepted the invitation.

"Oi promust the owld divil," said Micky afterwards to George and a select few, "not to blow the whole thing in the crowd ov' yez. And sure ut wuz partly young Westminster's fault. He caught Towser wolfin' a chicken on his Pat Malone, near his father's poultry-yard, and chased him. The dawg run to the top ov' the thrack down to Buckley wid the bhoy whackin' 'im wid rocks. He ducked down the thrack where the bhoy cudent folly him just as Joe happened to be goin' down fishin'. Joe didn't want to git laid out with the rocks the bhoy was chuckin' so he chummed up agin wid the dawg and tuk him down the rope. The owld liar says the dawg cud climb a rope loike a man. Moi bhoy thinks that Goliath shuk the rope and shpilt the dawg."

"If I'd thort that that was 'is tale," said Goliath to Geordie, some days later, "I wouldn't have wasted a drink on 'im. Wot really 'appened was this. The dawg got down orl right, but somebody sedooiced 'im inter fishin' with a big line fer jewies. 'E got fishin' with the line in 'is mouth instidder 'is paws, an' while 'e was rooting near the stump of 'is tail for a flea a big fish took 'old an' the line jammed between 'is teeth an' 'e got pulled out. Then a wave smacked 'im up agin a rock an' 'e landed a 'orrible, 'owlin' corpuss jest outer my reach. That's the ole truth, an' nothin' but the truth, an' if yer arsk me it wos a case of sooicide."

THRILLING FIGHT WITH A MURRAY COD.

"Yer can take it from me that cove was a liar," remarked Joe Smith one evening, when one of the members had told a story about someone catching a large cod.

There is no one so quick to detect the lie in others as he who himself handles the truth with that easy familiarity that breeds contempt. George Brown, the returned soldier, whose wounded leg was beginning to resume its original condition, had told how once, when he was out West bringing a mob of store cattle to Homebush, one of his droving companions had gone out fishing for cod with only his bullock-whip and a meat hook.

"I can only tell you what happened as far as I saw it," remarked George. "Ted Glover it was, and he hadn't even bait when he left the camp. He borrowed the meat hook from the cook, and went straight to the straining post at the corner of a cocky's selection and belted out the top rail. Then he put his hand in the hole in the post and pulled out a big green frog. He lashed a wattle thorn to the point of the meat hook so as to make a barb, and he bent over the top part of the hook into a ring. He tied the thong of the whip to the ring, and so he had as complete an outfit for a Wal-tonian of the back-blocks as ever man could desire. I know all that to be true, because I saw it, but the rest we gathered from Ted when he returned to the camp about nine o'clock that night after

being away since tea. He was dragging a cod over his shoulder, and the tail of it was just touching the ground. He told us that he had fished with his myrtle-handled whip-stick in a likely spot near a willow overhanging a deep stretch on the Macquarie, and that he had fastened to the cod a quarter of an hour after he had got there. He said that he had played the fish for about 35 minutes on his whip and thong, and he brought the fish along as proof of his story. I should think it must have weighed about fifty pounds."

Old Joe Smith had not been dignified with the name of "Goliath" for nothing, and the men who knew him best were laughing at the old chap's heroic endeavors to listen patiently to George's narration. At last, when he could contain himself no longer, he burst out with:

"He found somebody's set line, the liar!"

"Well, I'm only telling you what he told me," remarked George Brown.

"I can tell yer a experience wot 'appened ter me myself onct wen I was fishin' on the Namoi," said the ancient and privileged liar of the club-room. "There's no pickin' up set lines in it, though. It'd bin a sultry dav, an' a thunderstorm was brewin' out Mucki Creek way. As often 'appens before a thunderstorm the fish was very willin' orl the afternoon. I s'pose I'd cort about nineteen dozen fish includin' cat-fish. They called a catty a jewfish up there, an' some people preferred 'em ter cod. They're orl right, too," added the old man, parenthetically, "like eel, on'y sweeter."

"I've eaten them many a time," said one of the men.

"Yer no martyr," returned the old man. "The on'y way they can 'urt yer is wen they stick yer with the spines on their gillnets. Them bloomin' catties is orl grin ter look at—mouths as wide as that tram-guard's there," he added, indicating a

merry-faced uniformed member who had been standing fly-catching on the edge of the throng round the old man, drinking in the story. The young fellow's face shut with a snap, and the rosy flame that mounted to his cheeks gave denial to the oft-repeated libel that a tram-guard's blushing days depart after three months on the footboards.

"I 'ad a good line for 'eavy work," said Joe, "an' I'd got it set alongsider the river on a springer made out of a saplin'. The line was a bit of a hawser, I will admit, but it was called on ter do something that day an' needed ter be. I was jest skinnin' a black maggy fer bait fer my 'and-line wen I seen my springer bend. I 'ad a sheep's 'ead an' the innards of a scrub turkey on fer bait, so I noo wotever took 'old would natrally be a bonzer."

"Funny thing," ejaculated the tram-guard, "how these things always happen when you are doing something!"

"Whisht!" said Mick Moran, the wood and coal merchant; "'tis the father an' mother av lies that's talkin'; doan't break the shpell. The ould devil's in a trance, begob!"

"Trance, is it?" retorted the old man. "Micky, I wasn't in no trance then, an' you try an' sell me a ton o' wood an' see if I'm in one now."

He glared at his interrupters, and they subsided.

"Go on, Joe," said George Brown, encouragingly; "never mind them."

After a little persuasion and a mollifying drink the old man resumed.

"The minute I seen it bend," he said, "I was onter the line, an' started ter pay out rope. The fish asked fer it, an' I give it ter it. I never broker line on a fish yet, honest. I've throwed 'undreds away rather than break 'em. This line I was fishin' with was a 'undred yard coil, an' I reckoned I could turn the fish in that. But that was where I bally well fell in. I couldn't turn it excep' when it bally

well pleased. I let out seventy yards before I got a yard back, an' then, blow me if the fish didn't double back past me an' 'ead as fer down stream. I put on erbout forty-nine pounds of a strain, but the line burnt my 'ands, an' I 'ad ter let 'er zip."

"Did yer iver get it?" interjected Mick Moran, sarcastically.

"Did yer ever get yer brains brushed, Micky?" retorted Joe. "I 'aven't bin fishin' sixty year fer nothin'."

"How old wuz yer then?" asked Micky

"As old as somer the red 'air on yer ugly jaw is now, Micky," retorted the old man, placidly, and Micky snorted.

George Brown had to pour more oil on troubled waters, for he knew that sometimes the old man wandered off into the devious paths of verbal warfare with the hot-headed Irishman.

"I 'ad oner the fights o' my lifetime," continued the old fisherman, "an' it was about three, or maybe four 'ours after I 'ooked it that I took a seryus step with that fish. There was a old punt moored about half a mile down the stream under some willers, so I run down the bank fightin' my fish orl the time till I got ter it. Then I stepped inter the punt. It was tied to a stake in the shore by a bit o' rope, an' I'd 'ardly got in wen blow me if the stake don't pull out, and there I was afloat on the bloom-in' river."

"More trouble!" ejaculated George.

"No," replied Joe, "that's where you're mistook. I noo it was my meat then, becos the boat movin' stopped the 'ook joltin' a bigger 'ole in the fish's jaws. O' course, the fish went with the bloomin' current moster the time, but a coupler doubles it done saved me a bit o' trouble later on. I s'pose we travelled at the rate of about 19 miles a 'our. I sits down an' takes it easy, givin' the line a twist round my leg while I lit my pipe. Speaking o'

smokin' reminds me I come out without my bacca. 'As anybody got a pipeful?"

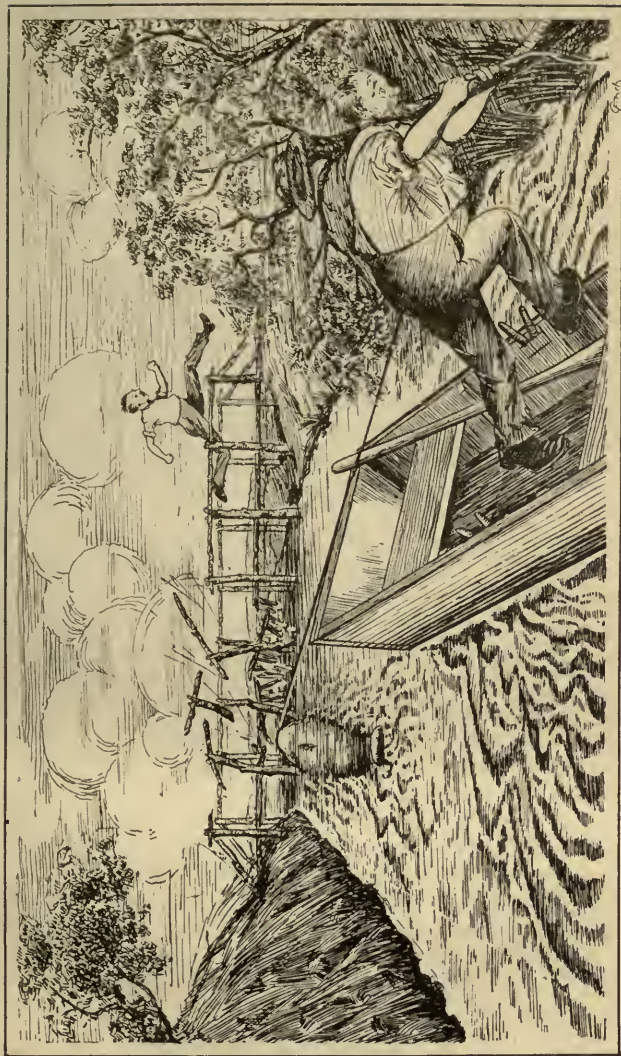
Never in the whole history of the club had anyone reputed to be sober or sane responded oftener than once to Joe's request for a pipeful by handing him a plug or a pouch. Micky Moran had done it once while in full possession of his faculties, and three times while suffering from the drought caused by too much selling of wood and coal on a summer day. Nearly everybody in the club-room had been victimised in turn, and it was therefore a great surprise when Micky handed Joe a whole plug and cheerily remarked, "Help yerself."

The old man took the plug and smelt it, aiming a curious glance at Micky from under his half-closed eyelids, but Moran's face reflected nothing but the purest benevolent intention. When the old man filled his pipe and handed the fraction of it back he soon lit up and puffed musingly. But the tobacco went out, so the old man lit another match and set it going again. Three more puffs and the tobacco was again out.

"Bit damp, Micky," remarked Goliath, and he lit three or four more matches in rapid succession, and got a puff or two with each. Then he borrowed the tram-guard's box of matches, and retained them absent-mindedly.

"Did you ever catch that cod, Joe?" asked one of the men, who thought the old man was in danger of losing the thread of his narrative.

"Dead sure," responded the old man. "Strange, too, how I done it. After I 'ad bin pulled about the river for p'raps nineteen miles I seen somethin' ahead wot promised trouble. It was a small foot-bridge over the river, an' the piles wot the saplins was put on was only erbout two or three feet apart. At the rate me an' the cod was travellin' I noo I'd collidge with it an' probly smash myself an' the boat, so jest as I was passin' under a swamp oak



JOE'S THRILLING FIGHT WITH A MURRAY COD.

erbout 50 yards from the bridge I grabs a branch an' holds on. The shock tore moster the oak clean out by its roots, an' checked me an' the punt a bit, but the fish got its head an' shoulders jammed between the piles an' bent 'em outer the perpen-bloomin'-dickler. It clean ruint that bridge, but, lumme, chaps, it nearly tore the arms outer my shoulders ter 'old that branch. Stick ter it I did, though, an' wen I let go, me an' the punt jest jammed down moderate hard agin the fish. That bunged open one of its gillets an' loosened the fish, so that it come up ter the top, orl but chuckin' a seven. I leaned over an' lifted its 'ead 'an' shoulders over the edge o' the punt, an' levered up as much o' the rest as I could get on. There was three foot o' that fish stickin over the stern o' the boat, without a word of a lie, chaps, an' the 'ead was up in the bow. Lumme! 'e was the biggest cod I ever seen."

"What did it weigh?" asked George Brown.

"Well, Geordie," said the old man, "I wouldn't tell yer a lie erbout the weight o' any fish, an' as a matter o' fact I never ackshully weighed it, but I got a estimate o' the weight orl the same. Wen I pulled back ter the camp I got a saplin' an' balanced it over a fence. Then me an' Jem Driver got on one end, an' tried ter pull the fish up on the other. We both 'ung on with orl our weight, but we couldn't get that cod orf the ground, excep' the 'ead an' part o' the shoulders."

"It must have been a boomer to stick between the piles of the bridge," remarked the tram-guard, with a wink at those nearest to him.

"It was," replied the old man, laconically, as he lit another match. "Wot's the matter with this bacca, Micky? It won't keep alight. Yer gev it away so bally free that I suspect there's somethin' up with it."

"Sure, it's all roight," replied the purveyor of coke. "It's some phwat kem out av the wreck av

the Austhralia. It got the laste wettin' in the wur-ruld wid say watter—eh, phwat?"

"Blessed if I didn't think so," returned the old man. "There's no friendship in a trick like that, Micky," he added, reproachfully.

"What did you do with the cod, Joe?" asked one of the men, interrupting the narcotic excursion.

"Eat it," promptly replied the veteran. "We fed on it fer a month, part of it salted, eatin' mutton ony by way of a change like. It was the whackinest cod I ever seen."

At this stage the old man betrayed a tendency to go over some portions of his narrative with the garrulousness of old age, and the crowd around him melted away.

THE CATFISH AND THE KITTEN FISH.

"If there's anybody in the round world wot deserves a moniment, an' a marble one at that, it's the cove wot 'as caught the most cat-fish," said Goliath Joe. "I don't play a lone 'and in sayin' that, either. There's some poor woounded blokes in this 'ere billiard-room wot'd subscribe, I know."

"I've had one jab from a catty," said George Brown, the returned soldier, "and I'll put in my little donation."

"Well," remarked Joe, "if there's enuf of yer to make it a decent purse, I can promise ter giv it to a cove wot could win 'ands down."

"I don't think they're takin any, Joe," said the marker, when the old man paused for a response.

"Well, it don't matter," returned Joe. "The bloke I 'ad in my mind's gettin' the old age penshun an' e' can struggle erlong on that. But wot I started ter tork about was catties—the fish with wiskers, an' blarsted bad tempers."

"Whiskers, Joe?" queried George. "They're not whiskers, they're barbels."

"I don't take no stock in them jimnasium names," replied the old man, "plain wiskers is good enuf fer me. A bloke wot I noo—a English Johnny, with knee britches an' a rod an' a creel, went with me ter the Parramatta River one night larst season ter fish fer brim orfer oner the wharves. I sent 'im onter the wharf while I fished a spot I'd burlied the day before about fifty yards away. I noo wot sorter fish 'e'd bump on the wharf, in addishun to

'avin' kids gallopin' over 'is tackle. 'Sides, who'd stand a johnny mug near 'im brimmin'? None o' you, I'll bet."

Joe paused and glared round to find contradiction, but there was not a dissentient murmur, so he continued:—

"The brim that night was very shy, an' took 'ookin', but I got seven out, an' orl the time I didn't 'ear nothin' from 'im on the wharf. Thinks I, 'well 'e's a different kinder mug ter the general run. They're orl gas wen then ain't catchin' bung or losin' bait.' So I thort I'd go round and borry a bit of 'is good gut an' a few patent 'ooks. I found 'e'd been playin' a deep game. 'Is first words was, 'I've been doin' good work, old cove. I didn't let on becos I wanted ter beat yer.' 'Wot yer got?' I arsked. 'Oh, about nineteen fair-sized brim,' he says, showin' me a 'eap o' wrigglin' fish behind 'im. Send I may live, Geordie, they was orl cat-fish an' 'e didn't know. The funniest thing about it was that 'e'd taken every oner them fish orfer the 'ook with 'is 'ands an' never got a punch from oner them. 'Ere,' I says, 'Bloke! you'll bump trouble if yer 'andle them fish. Them's cat-fish.' 'Well, they're dead easy ter catch,' 'e says, an' jest then 'e struck an' 'ooked another an' yanked it in. 'E looked at me with a grin as 'e started ter take it orfer the 'ook, but orl of a sudden the grip went like's if the wind 'ad blowed it out. an' 'e lets out a most ungordly yell. 'By josh,' 'e says, 'I'm stabbed.' 'E'd got one at larst, fair in the top o' the thumb, an' I 'ad no end o' bother with 'im."

"How did you get him round?" asked someone.

"I never got 'im round at orl," said Joe. "The doctors done that. But I wasted 'arf of wot was in 'is flask on 'im. I never seen a crooker cove in my life."

"You should have given him the whole flask," said the previous interjector.

"Go an' get yer brains brushed," replied Joe, with supreme contempt. "Where do yer think I come in? By josh, that bloke was sick, though. I thort he'd chuck a seven, but 'e got better tords sun-up, an' I took 'im 'ome on the first steamer. 'E was in bed for nineteen days, an' jolly near got erri-siplas."

"They are poisonous, sure," remarked Mick Moran, the wood and coal merchant, "nearly as bad as a shplinter off a peppermint billet."

"Nearly!" ejaculated Joe. "Micky, yer wanderin'. Better look out or yer'll be givin' somebody 'is full weight termorrow. Why, they're the poisinestest fish in the 'ole pond. The river ones is nearly as bad as the sea ones. If yer ever want ter die 'ard, Micky, get stabbed by a old tom cat-fish. Them 'ere old tommy bucks is abso-bloomin'-lutely the wust. They are loaded orl along the barrel with poison."

"There is one thing in their favor," remarked Geordie. "The flesh is good to eat."

"So they says," replied the ancient. "They sutinly says that if yer cut orf the 'ead soon after yer ketch 'em yer will find the flesh white and sweet. I seen some moddles of 'em at the University once labiled food fishes."

"What degree did you take, Joe? D.D.L.?" asked Geordie.

"I never took nothin'," replied Joe, indignantly. "They took preshus good care o' that. Everything was locked up. A bloke wot works there took me in ter see the moddles, an' 'e kept too close orl the while. But never mind about that. Them moddles was the realest things I ever seen, an' they wos orl marked eadible on the card. On their bloomin' Pat Malones! I aint takin' any catties."

"Are they really hard to catch?" asked a beginner, and the simplicity of the question evoked a roar of laughter.

"They're 'arder not ter ketch," returned Goliath. "They belong to the sneakin' sorter fish. They crawl onter the bait an' try ter kid themselves they 'ave a 'ard task doin' it. Then they close down on it an' lie there suckin' it. A mug like you out on the roof o' the river don't know wot's up. Likely enuf yer-ve 'ad yer bait lyin' at the bottom o' the river in the current gettin' covered with the sorft mud wot floats down, an' no fish on earth but a dirty catty would think of findin' it there. The catty digs it outer the mud an' wolfs it an' gits the 'ook stuck down inside its wescoat or near its tail. The fish gives a shudder when it feels the cold iron, like a bloke takin' a tonic, an' that makes the mug upstairs think somethin' is up, so 'e 'its it a sockdollager. O' course 'e's got no earthly charnce o' missin' the fish or shakin' it orf. 'E's gotter ketch it,—bloomin' well got ter."

"I suppose you can tell when you've caught one before you see it," remarked George.

"Yes, suttinly," replied Goliath. "Same's I can tell wot any kinder fish is wot I've 'ooked. But I didn't learn that orl of a sudden. A big bit I was born with, an' the rest I picked up in ways I'm not goin' to eggsplain."

"I believe, ye owld divil, ye collogue with the fishes themselves," said Micky Moran.

"An' if I do, Micky," returned Joe, "it's made me 'onest an' truthful. I've got several characters writ by big bugs wot knows me, an' they orl agree. One of 'em went so far as ter say, 'As regards 'onesty, I would not put anything past Mister Smith.' Yer never 'ad a compliment like that paid ter yer, Micky Moran, so noner yer sneerin'. Ye'd better go outside an' pick the splinters outer yer intellex."

"It's all right, Joe," remarked Geordie in soothing tones. "He's not sneerin' at you."

"Well, let 'im keep that 'ole in 'is face shut," returned Joe. "I'm allus afraid somebody'll be mistaken that great flappin' mug o' 'is fur the mouth of a wood and coal mine an' wanderin' in. If everyone 'ad 'is doos 'e ort ter be feedin' on 'ominy."

"Ye're a durrtty liar!" burst from Micky wrathfully. "Gimme a handful o' his ugly ginger whiskers an' I'll show 'im who ort ter be in quod." As he spoke, he advanced to make his threat good, but two or three men interposed, and Micky, after chewing his spleen for a minute, subsided with a half laugh.

"Catties," continued Joe, as if nothing had happened to ruffle the proceedings, "has kittens same's ordinary fummies. Yer can see the little ones friskin' about in the mud if yer watch close. Wen the winter comes, they burrer in the mud an' jest lay there in the warm with their eyes stickin' out. There's bloomin' millions of 'em in the 'Awkesbury an' in Sydney 'Arbor. One night, fishin' orf a wharf at Point Piper, I cort one weighin' twenty-nine pounds, but it slipped in jest as I was liftin' it out on a number twenty-four silk twist."

"Bad luck," said George sympathetically.

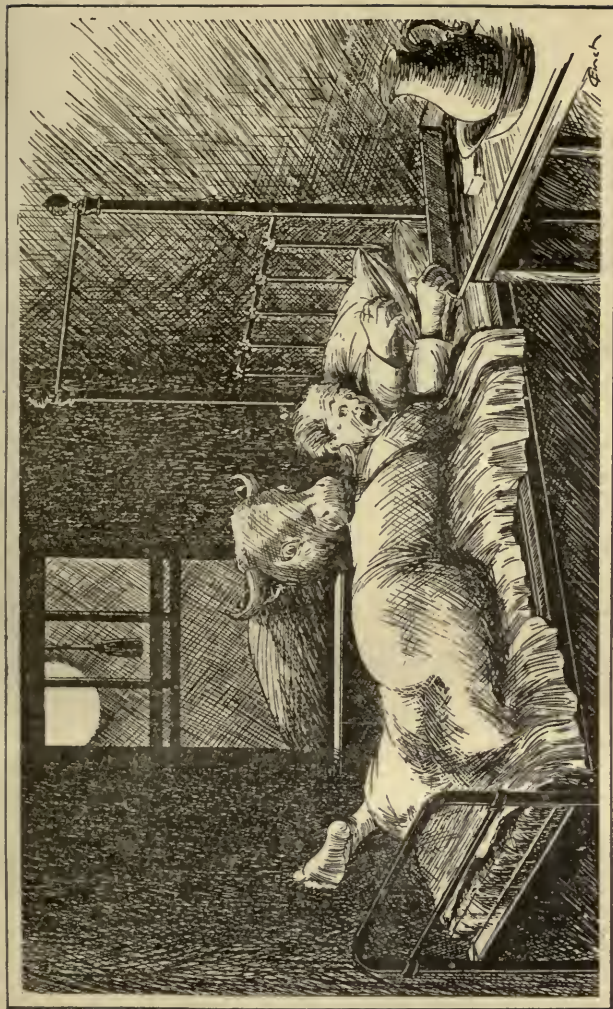
"No. Bad fishin'," returned Joe. "I orter remembered the line wouldn't 'old more than four pounds, but I got a bit rattled."

"Where do they carry the poison?" asked the beginner.

"Orl over theirselves," replied the ancient. "There's some spines near their gillnets, an' some on the fins at the back, an' some other places, an' they orl go down inter the poisin bags. Now, I'll jest tell yer in one breath wot catties are. They're the slimiest, ugliest, fiddle-headedest, gash-faced brutes wot swims. They orter be done away with, an' so ort leather-jackits, but until people start ter eat 'em their numbers won't grow much less. Yer

can take that from me as bein' more reliable than a tip by oner them weather-profits."

Then Joe borrowed a pipeful from a stranger who did not know the capacity of his pipe, and, leaving the benefactor ruefully looking at the remnants of his plug, he faded out into the darkness of the night.



"THE COW MISTOOK THE YANK'S SANDY 'AIR FER A BUNCH O' OUR DROUGHT GRASS."

THE YANKEE BEGINNER.

"Did you ever go black bream fishing with a beginner, Joe?" asked one of the men one evening of Goliath. The club-room was pretty full, and both the billiard tables were monopolised, so there was an idle knot of men round the old chap's corner of the couch. An audience invariably stimulated the old fisherman to open all his stops.

"I have ter my sorer," he replied, "an' if there's anybody in the 'ole world wot orter be dumped, it's a mug at the game."

"Why, everybody has to learn," remarked a listener.

"Yes, but there's ways o' learnin' an' goin' on while learnin'," remarked the old man, "that some coves don't seem ter cotton ter. I'm allus ready to 'elp a mug o' the right kind, but I 'ate the mug wot can't be taught. Brimmin' is a seryus business, an' mighty near a relijus one. It would be reely a relijus business on'y fer the times yer miss yer fish. But unfortnatly some mugs don't seem ter reckernise it even as seryus. Me an' Geordie Brown an' Jack Kains 'ad a trip with oner them sorter blokes ter Woy Woy one day."

"Are you referring to the Yankee?" asked George Brown, who was always round when the old man tuned up.

"Yes—the cove with the goatee an' the claw-hammer coat," said Goliath; "used ter talk through 'is flamin' nose an' say, 'Right here,' 'ha'f a dollar,'

fer half-a-caser, an' 'Gee whizz' instedder 'My oath,' an' 'Struth.' Geordie 'ad kidded 'im ter wear 'is Yankee clothes, I think—sorter clothes yer'd go ter a Fourth o' July recepshun in. Blowed if I didn't nearly fall over the edge o' the platform in Sydney wen I put my lamps on 'im."

"I introduced them to each other," remarked George, "but they seemed a fishing party misfit, so to speak—Joe and the Yank. I can't say that Joe was any too polite to him."

"Perlite!" ejaculated the ancient. "'Ow could anyone be perlite ter a cove wot done wot 'e done, an' dressed like Barnum? I pretty soon talked ter 'im an' let 'im know some of 'is sins. So did Geordie, too, in a quiet way, fer orl 'is kid erbout my want o' perlitiness."

"Well, considering the quality of his whisky and the amount you two consumed, you might have treated him better at first," put in Jack Kains. "Lucky he was good tempered."

"Don't talk erbout the whisky," said the old man. "Wot I was goin' ter say is this. Wen I go out brimmin' I wear old pants an' coat an' clobber appropret ter my game. I didn't objecter Geordie an' Jack wearin' sweaters that day, seein' they're 'alf-baked toffs, but this Yankee in 'is rig got orl over me. Come out brimmin' 'e did, dressed fer a bloomin' comick gardin' party. Lumme, it took me erbout three minutes ter spot them clothes orl over with salt water wen we got erfloat."

"You did, you mean old devil," returned Jack Kains, "and then you started a lecturette about clothes for boating."

"Mean!" echoed Joe. "I enjoyed it, espeshually in view of 'is muckin' up our brimmin' afterwards. We moored below the Rip, an' I outs with a number 30 silk twist near as fine as a cobweb. It 'ad bin a scorchin' 'ot walk down ter Pat Murray's, an'

the Yank 'ad bin talkin' to 'isself erbout the 'eat wile we was walkin' fast. 'Wal, I'l be goldarned ef I ever struck it this hot outside the Panama Isthmus,' 'e says, an' 'Say, you fellows ought to be in good training for the hot time you're sure to get hereafter,' an' 'Say, kin yer lay me on to an iced whisky sour?' an' that sorter talk."

Joe's imitation of the Yankee drawl was indescribably laughable, and the men roared with amusement.

"Wen we got down ter the Rip o' course the wind was a bit of a contrast," continued Joe, "an' the Yankee's teeth begun ter chatter. 'Great snakes and blue blizzards!' he ses, 'what sort of climate d'yer call this? I'd give a hundred dollars for a through elevator trip a thousand miles nearer the sun.' 'Keep calm,' I ses, 'an' keep cool.' 'Ca'm an' cool,' 'e ses back at me, 'how in the name of all that's holy kin I du that in sech a place as this—it's hot and cold too blamed sudden. I wish I was back in Sydney.' 'I wish ter 'eaven yer was,' I ses. 'E'd bin fishin' alongsider me."

Joe paused and reminded one of the bystanders that it was a long time between drinks, and while the refresher was coming George Brown took up the tale.

"The Yankee had a cutty-hunk line equal to an 18-cord snapper line," he said, "and as the tide was running pretty fast, he had to put on a six-ounce lead. He stood up in the boat to throw out, and rocked the boat so that Joe lost two fish."

"Twenty-two," interrupted the old man, from over the edge of the pewter.

"We won't quarrel about that," replied George. "It was all right so long as he kept his line still when it was out, but he kept feeling bites and jagg-ing. He put his macintosh on because he was cold, and it kept flapping Joe in the face when he stood up. Whenever the lead hit the water it was

just like a man falling overboard. He kept pulling up every two minutes to see if the bait was still on, and at last Joe fixed on the bait for him.

"Yes, I gev 'im a poultice o' wurrah I cort," said Joe, wiping his mouth, "an' told 'im ter leave it still fer a big one. 'E'd have cort nothin' if I'd 'ad my way. I'd a landed 'im on a oyster lease an' left 'im on'y fer the other coves."

"He irritated Joe somewhat," said George. "Wanted to know how it felt when a fish was on, how the fish took the bait, when to strike, and how to play a fish and make it leave the water without ruffling the top. Joe caught a'dozen black bream, Jack nine, and I seven before they quitted. The climax was reached when Joe was playing a beauty, and the Yank wanted to do it for him. 'Say,' he drawled, 'I guess I could do that real pretty if I could only get them on. When I was down in Florida I played a tarpon for three hours.'"

"'Im play it," said Joe, scornfully. "It muster bally well played 'im."

"'Would you let me play that fish now, and show you it's no hold up?' he says," continued George; "'I've got four aces in one hand and a royal flush in the other,' he says. 'No! darn yer,' thundered Joe, 'yer never 'eld lines in yer 'and like these, an' yer not goin' ter 'old one now. Come back ter Horsetralia next year an' pay me six quid a lesson an' I'll show yer 'ow it's did.' Joe played the fish for ten minutes and then slipped the landing net under a nice jewfish of about nine pounds weight."

"Nineteen pounds," corrected the old man.

"It might have grown to that by this time," replied George. "but it was nine then."

"I gev that cove some useful 'ints," said Goliath, taking up the thread of the narrative. "'E cort a octopuss at larst, an' blow me if 'e didn't be'ave as if the sea-serpent was on. 'E puts as much work

inter gettin' a dirty old worm of a octopuss in as if it'd bin a whale. Wen 'e got it ter the top it shot one feeler over the boat an' clung there. 'Great snakes!' 'e ses, 'what sort of a cinch has this stranger got on our wood?' Then 'e leaned over ter try ter dislodge it. O' course the octo. done its Horsetralian best ter improve the occashun, 'cos it skwirted erbout a quart o' black ink down 'is pretty shirt front an' inter 'is face. By josh, 'e did swear! Some of it got inter 'is mouth an' 'e yelled fer whisky. Geordie got 'old of 'is flask fust, but it 'ad ter pass me an' Jack Kains before it reached 'im, an' we requirin' some stimmylashun in consequence of seein' such a 'orrifyin' sight, the tide nat'rally ebbed a bit in the flask before 'e got it. Finally I cut the octopuss orf, but 'e torked erbout 'is fight with it till it nearly made me sick. Every now an' then Geordie or me or Jack would talk erbout the 'orrible death 'e 'ad escaped from, an' 'ave another nip ter keep our spirits up. Foolin' erbout with the octopuss natrally druv orl the brim away, an' we 'ad ter do something."

"But the best of the fun was when we got back to the boarding-house that night," said George. "It was a hot night, and we left the bedroom window open. The Yankee had never struck anything so savage as our mosquitoes in his life before, and they made up to him splendidly. They welcomed him as a long-lost brother. He proved a regular charm for them, and they were so busy with him that they neglected us. It was smack-smack every second with him, and the Yankese he talked nearly made the lot of us fall out of our beds laughing. He was very dry, too, and got up three or four times to the water bottle. Then Joe told him to go to some place where there is no water, when he wanted to refill it, so when he came in with it full he placed it beside his bed."

Then Joe chipped in again.

"Wen 'e did get orf ter sleep,' said he, "Pat Murray's or somebody else's bloomin' 'eifer chipped in. Soshable sorter cows they 'ave down at Woy Woy. I think this one mistook the Yank's sandy 'air fer a bunch o' our drought grass. Anyway, she stuck 'er bloomin' nadget through the open winder and licked 'im on the for'ead. 'E woke up, an' flung a yell outer 'is face wot brought us orl outer bed in a second. The cow she slung 'er tail round an' knocked over the water bottle as she run fer 'er natural. The Yankee told us 'e'd seen the devil, an' Geordie told 'im it wos a warnin' ter give up whisky. We noo wot it wos, becos we'd seen that 'eifer before. We 'ad preshus little sleep the rest o' the night. Every now an' then Geordie'd bust out larfin', an' when 'e stopped this other whisky shark, Kains, 'ere'd start. The Yankee filled up the gaps sayin' prayers an' smackin' at moskeeters an' swearin' between wiles most 'orrible. Oh, we 'ad a lovely night, I promise yer."

"We got a bit square next day," said Jack Kains, "for the Yankee wouldn't take any of the whisky, and Joe found room for it without stretching himself much. The Yankee was a humorist, anyway, and no one but Joe would have expected him to know all about the game at first try."

"I'll tell yer wot I expeck," retorted the old man. "I expeck a man not ter plank 'is bloomin' 'oofs on my line or be'ave as 'e did, but ter sit still an' watch until 'e's got the hang o' the game, keepin' 'is 'ead shut as much as 'e can. I expeck 'im ter go brimmin' in clothes wot stand salt water an' mud in case they want ter climb on him, an' not ter plump in big blobser lead like a buryal at sea. But you take it from me, brimmin' ain't a thing easy learned like golluf or cricket or tennis or somer those other easy games. It takes brains, an' that's why I ollus done well at it."

THE SHARK SHOW.

"Heigh ho!" sighed Goliath Joe, as he stretched himself out in the corner of the couch, "yer needn't think it, chaps, but it's a fact that I rolled in dollars onct."

"Yez look as if yez had bin hurted be somethin'," said Micky Moran, the wood and coal merchant; "but I niver thort, Joseph, me bhoy, that annything cud iver have injured yer tough jaw."

"Micky," returned Joe, blandly, "if I had a jaw as 'ard as yer consunce I'd 'a bin rich yet. It's bein' generous what's ruined me."

"How did you get rich?" asked one of the bystanders.

"With a shark," responded the old-age pensioner. "Jes a common old nineteen-foot blue-pointer."

"How? Selling it in steaks?" queried his interlocutor.

"No. Jest showin' it," replied Joe, the ancient and privileged liar of the clubroom. "Me an' 'Arry Griffin was cruisin' round the 'arbor one mornin' pickin' up 'ats wot 'ad blowed orf 'eads on the ferry boats, wen we met it. There'd been a pretty stiff breeze blowin' the day before, an' there was a pretty good crop o' kiddies' 'ats floatin' about. We used ter make a bit out o' 'ats durin' the windy season."

"Good business," ejaculated one of the men.

"Yes," replied Joe, "but not as good as this shark. Well, we found it floatin' near Bradley's 'Ead. It'd been 'ooked on oner Proctor's lines, I think, an' bruk away. I 'eard after that some

bloke 'ad shot it while it was browsin' on a dead cow floatin' there. Anyway, it was deader'n Micky's consunce wen we got it."

"I shouldn't have thought there was much to be made out of a dead shark," remarked George Brown, the returned soldier with the game leg. "One twice as big and alive might have been a draw."

"Humph!" said the old man. "Shows 'ow little you know. It was twict as big by the time we got it to where we showed it. Wonderful 'ow it grew. It was twenty-nine foot long when we showed it. 'Arry noo a cove wot 'ad a big bell tent, so 'e borried it, tellin' the cove 'e wanted to go campin' with it. Then I noo the inspector an' the sargint at the Water Police Station, an' I got 'em ter let us put the tent up near oner them wool ware'ouses near Circular Quay. We towed the shark round at night, and drug it inter the tent. A painter writ the sign ter go over the tent, an' there we was."

"What did you have on the sign?" asked George Brown.

"Oh! That was my idea," said Goliath. "It said on the sign:

"MONSTER MAN EATER.

"COME AND SEE THE SHARK.

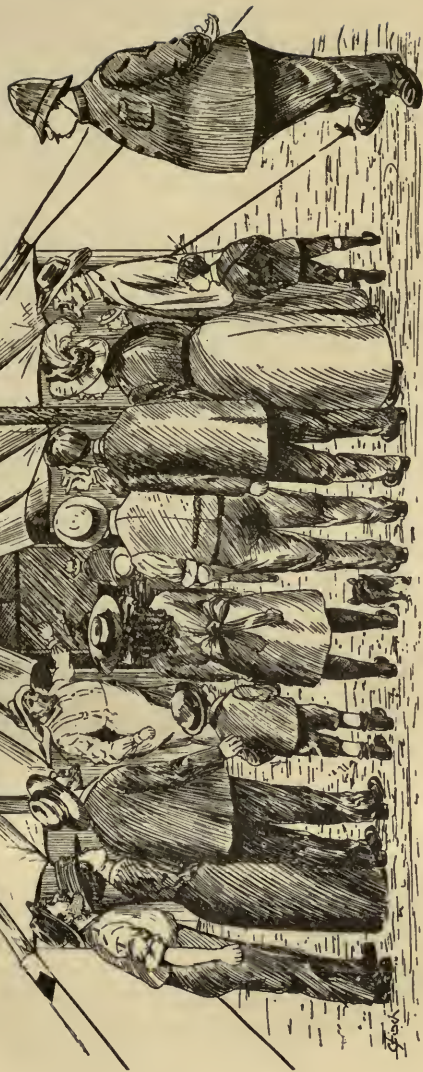
"CONTENTS: A PAIR OF MEN'S BOOTS,
A WAISTCOAT, AND A LADY'S LEG.

"In the mornin' we started yellin' about the man-eater, an' twasn't long before we was coinin' money at sixpence a 'ead, kids 'arf price."

"Where did you get the lady's leg?" asked one of the old man's auditors.

"We never 'ad no lady's leg," replied Joe. "That was ony a bit o' bluff ter git the crowd there; but I'd thunk that out, too. There was a woman cut up by the train a day before an' all the pieces was in the morgoo, which is Latin for a dead house, over the other side the Quay. You never seen sech

MONSTER MAN EATER
COME AND SEE THE SHARK
CONTENTS A PAIR OF MENS BOOTS
A WAISTCOAT AND A LADY'S LEG.



"COME AND SEE THE MONSTER MAN EATER!"

a lot o' men as there was askin' us where the leg was. They seemed ter be strangely interested in it. They come erlong in shoals," said the old man, chuckling. "Why, in a 'our, chaps, my pockets was bulgin' out with silver, an' I ad ter run over ter the pub ter change it."

"I suppose you had no difficulty about the other exhibits," remarked George.

"None at all," replied Joe. "The waistcoat was 'Arry's an' the boots was mine. We ripped the shark open ter show 'em there was no decepshun."

"Was there no trouble about having no leg to show them?" asked one of the men.

"A bit," returned Joe. "Some of 'em wanted ter get their money back becos it wasn't there, but I explains ter them that the pleece wouldn't let me keep it there, an' that it was over in the morgoo. Then some of 'em wants ter know if they could go over an' see it, an' so I sells 'em orders at sixpence extra each ter see it. They came at it," chuckled the old man. "A noospaper cove 'ad come down early with a nice bundle o' clean paper takin' notes, an' I borried all the paper 'e 'ad left, ter write the orders on. We ran outter paper in a short time, an' I 'ad ter go an' buy some more."

"How did they get on at the morgue?" asked George, as he sent someone out to refill the old man's measure.

"The fust lot did orl right," replied Joe. "The morgoo man let 'em in, although 'e was a bit puzzled about the orders, but by-an'-bye 'e gets suspicious an' asks queschins, an' then e' 'ears about the shark. Over 'e comes like a bloomin' old bandy red-shank ter me, an' 'e says, 'Wot's this game yous are puttin' up on me?' 'e says. 'Wot game?' I ses. 'E was a old geezer about ninety years of age. 'Why, sendin' blokes over to the morgoo,' 'e ses. 'I'm tired of chuckin' of 'em out.' 'That's orl right,' I ses. Why, chaps, the poor old bloke

couldn't 'a downed anythin' stronger than a long pewter. 'You let 'em in,' I ses, 'an' I'll give yer harf a sov. 'Ere's five bob now on account.' That settled 'im, an' 'e went away 'appy."

"What did yon make out of the venture, Joe," asked George.

"About £329," replied the ancient, as he hid his blushes in a foaming tankard. "There was about 11,519 people come inter the tent that I got paid fer, an' Lord knows 'ow many got in without pay-in'. Along tords evenin' the top bloke o' the Bord o' 'Ealth comes along, an' twasn't long before 'e scented wot 'e said was a cross between a sewer an' a guano ship. At any rate, soon after 'e'd complained ter me, a bloke with brass buttons an' a 'orty air comes down an' ses, 'You get outer this with that carrion.'

"'Carrion,' I ses. 'There's no carrion 'ere. This is a shark show."

"'I don't care wot yet call it,' 'e ses, 'it's a dumb noosance. There's people bein' took ter the 'ors-pital orl day with the smell of it.'

"'Come an' ave a drink,' I ses, an' 'e mellered at once.

"Then we went and got the morgoo man, an' ad a few refreshments. I dunno 'ow many we 'ad but when we got back ter the tent, blow me it wasn't arf full o' dead'eads. One cove 'ad 'is knife out, prizin' teeth outer the shark. I pretty soon talked ter 'im. 'Avin the two blokes with buttons on with me gev me a strong case. 'Them teeth,' I ses ter the cove, 'is a guinea each apiece,' I ses. 'E wanted ter argue the point, 'but I said I'd give 'im in charge if 'e didn't part up. 'I ort ter charge you five quid fer damagin' the exhibit,' I ses. 'E didn't like it, but 'e' 'ad ter pay up. Bulgin' out? Well, I tell yer my pockets nearly busted away from their moorin's with the weight of it. I tells the 'Ealth bloke I'd shift the shark soon, an' I went

away ter look fer 'Arry. 'E 'ad no right goin' away like 'e did, cos I 'ad ter pay a bloke ter look after the door while I went. I met 'Arry staggerin' erlong not far from the tent. 'E was deader'n the shark, in a manner o' speakin'."

"I—hic—tracked it 'ome,' 'e ses, with a silly sorter larf. 'It's orl ri—hic—Joe.'"

"'You go ter the barber's,' I ses, 'an' get yer 'ead shampood before yer go 'ome,' I ses, 'or yer missus'll be gettin' ter yer.'"

"'E disappeared, an' I seen no more of 'im that night. I found 'im next mornin' at the Water Pleece Court, an' 'e looked as 'f 'e 'ad been sham-pood by a windmill. Bunged eye, patch orf 'is cheek, collar gorn, orl the buttons busted orf 'is coat an' a sleeve gorn. I tell yer 'e looked a bloomin' wreck. I paid fer 'im, an' 'e come out."

"How did you do about getting rid of the shark?" asked one of the men.

"That was the 'ardest job of all," replied the old man. "I got the morgoo cove becos 'e was used ter sniffy jobs ter undertake the work o' firin' it somewhere. 'E got two stoodents of embarmin' wot was 'angin' round the hotel to 'elp. They tied ropes round the shark, an' orled it ter the edge o' the Quay. Jest as they was goin' ter tip it in, a copper comes erlong an' tells 'em that if they did 'e'd run 'em in fer plootin' the 'arbor, as 'f that was possible."

"More trouble!" remarked George.

"Yes," said the old man. "We 'ad ter 'ire a dray, an' wile we was pullin' it on the shark broke, an' the 'ead end stayed on the ground. It was orful. I 'ad ter go an' lean over the Quay fer ten minutes, an' I couldn't 'elp 'em any longer. I 'ad no more interest in anythin'. Then blow me if the three of 'em don't get up a bloomin' strike fer more wages. They wanted a quid each before they'd go on. I gev it ter them," said Joe, sadly.

"I couldn't 'elp myself. Where'd I 'a been with a strike an' a dead shark on my 'ands at once? Then the bloke with the dray said 'e'd run it back inter the tent if I didn't tip 'im the same, an' I 'ad ter do it. Some shillin's an' 'arf-crowns dropped outer my pockets in a sorter running' stream while I'd been leanin' over the Quay, but I couldn't 'a stop-ped 'em if I'd tried. I'll show yer the spot if any o' yers is good divers."

"When did all this happen?" asked a bystander.

"It was either 1849 or 1850," replied Joe, "I wouldn't be quite sure, an' I wouldn't like ter tell a lie erbout it."

"Why, you said there was a morgue there," said one of the men. "There was no morgue there then."

"It's time fer me ter be goin'," said Joe, ignoring the remark. "I didn't come 'ere ter argue. I only started ter tell yer 'ow I was once rich, no matter wot I look like now."

Then the old man shifted his hat well on to his nose, and, with a "Good-night, chaps," that included the whole billiard-room, sauntered off home.

A DIFFERENT POINT OF VIEW.

"You mustn't think you're a fisherman because you 'ad water on the brain w'en you was a baby," said Goliath Joe to young Jack Brown as they stood watching the fly-casters at work on a punt stationed in one of the Centennial Park lagoons. Both had accompanied a couple of friends to the park to see what was to most of them a new game, but Joe would have died rather than admit that there was any section of the sport of fishing of which he was ignorant.

All the way to the pond the old man had been explaining things about trout. He had once been at Jindabyne on a road-repairing job, and had there struck a few angling tourists, and over the bar counter had absorbed some of the local bucolic "throws-off" at the men dressed in English knee-breeches, many-pocketed jackets, and hats garlanded with multi-colored flies. He had also read in the newspapers about trout-fishing, and the stories he had read had filtered through to that section of his brain convolutions which recorded personal experiences. He actually believed he had caught trout, but not with the artificial fly.

He liked the strenuous casting work, especially when the wet-fly distance event was being contested; but he absolutely failed to understand how much more difficult the dry-fly casting was. The energy required for the wet-fly distance work, however, pleased him greatly, although he never

at any moment brought his mind to appreciate the application of fly-casting to fishing on a river.

"It's a poor thing to call sport," he commented.

"Why, there are whole libraries about trout-fishing," said Brown.

"That's nothin'," returned the old man. "There's books writ about golf and other ridiklis things. I don't reckon a trout fisherman is a sport any more'n a golfer. Neither of 'ems in it with a rock fisher, wot goes out with just 'is tackle, and 'ooks and railway bolts for sinkers, and takes a risk of gettin' busted on the tracks down the cliffs or amongst the boulders as big as 'ouses tilted all ways like's'f a earthquake 'ad been there; and 'e ain't in it with netters on a 'ungry' aul with a long net and only two to get it in.

"They toil not, and they don't spin," he quoted. "All these yobs can do is to stand on a river bank lookin' pretty and jerk a bait where they see a fish. They make a noise like a grass-'opper drownin', and if they can't get the fish to bite that way they put on a frog or a grass-'opper to make noises theirselves. Do I see the fish I go after? Not me. And the ones I do 'ook or net get plenty of fightin' charnces from me, beside wot they take theirselves. I've 'eard those troutists talkin' all about it, and crowin' about short-risers and two-pounders like's'f they was anything, and yappin' about flies not one as good as a Jindabyne blowfly. Why, if you go near 'em w'en they're fishin' they put on a face like a Manly wharf brimmer w'en the crowd's around treadin' on 'is silk twist."

Said one of the party: "I've heard they take some risks wading in rapids full of slippery granite boulders and unexpected holes."

"Risks, me blue ear!" scoffed the old man, who had brought up a family of ten mostly by net and hand-line fishing. "That's one o' the tales them 'alf-a-frog-better'n-no-bait blokes pitches you mugs.

They wear water-tight bags on their legs, and then they don't go in deeper'n their boots. Wear 'em to keep out the cold. Parasites on the rest o' the community, that's wot they are; prodoocin' nothin', and earnin' nothin', but just loafin' and spendin' money. I tell you wot I'd do to the bloke wot interdooced trout to Australia. I'd give him a Docker twist of ten years' penal, like I would the other joint wot brought the foxes."

"And the rabbit man?" asked Jack, who was a clerk in a wool warehouse.

"No; I wouldn't touch 'im. Rabbits is useful, though they ain't sport, except w'en you go out for 'em with a stick and a ferret or a good little dorg. Besides, they make work for lots o' people, and are good to eat and send away to the starvin' millions in England wot never get a taste of fresh mutton. Did you ever 'ear of trout bein' exported?"

"No; because we eat them all here," said Jack. "we often get them in the restaurants. You can read the name on the menus nearly any day."

Goliath replied witheringly, "Trout, me blue ear. You never see a trout in a restyouraunt. Wot you get there is black-fish and perch, and muck o' that sort. If you was any judge o' fish you'd 'a known that. The only places you get trout to eat is in the 'ouses o' the people wot 'as these jobs as payin' bloomin' guests during wot they call the open season. I've eat 'em, 'undreds of 'em, and I wouldn't give a two-pound brim or a squire or a leather-jacket for a bag full of 'em."

With hardly a pause the old man went on:

"I can't understand them Fisheries Department joints keepin' the supply of trout up, spendin' money on nurseries and cradles, and 'atcheries, smoodgin' to these trout guns wot give two bob for birds they call cormorants and I call old black shags."

"But the shag's a chain-eater, and must get through a lot of fish," said Jack.

"Wot if 'e does?" retorted the old fisherman. "That's 'is food long before you came on the earth; but all their troubles is about their freckled trout. They say it's an offence against the cannons of real sport to ketch 'em on a worm or a grass-'opper w'en they're writin' to the papers about poachers. Wot earthly use are worms and grass-'oppers for if they ain't to feed birds and fish? It's the early trout wot ketches the worm as well as the willy-wagtail. And the side these kanuts put on! If they meet another bloke with a rod on the river they won't speak to 'im till they're been inter-dooed. Surfin's far better than that. You can interdooce yourself by accident in the breakers, and it might turn out alright, too, although you suttingly take some risks if it's a 'andsome young woman a wave knocks you against. O' course, I don't believe in chummin' up to every bloke wot fishes, but on general principles a rod and a fishin' line's a pretty good stificate of character, although they don't tell you the other bloke's pedigree. But wot I'm gettin' at is that there ain't no need to put on so much dorg about the game of trout fishin'.

"One joker up at Jindabyne at the little old granite pub says to me, patronisin', one night, 'Do you drink beer, Joe?' 'Na,' I says. 'I color me Sunday tan boots with it.' I don't take any of 'is sarcasm. You take it from me, most of the fishin' some of these guns does is in their clubs. They're good on the flute if they ain't on the rod. As to always fishin' with a bunch of peacock's feathers on a 'ook, that's all garden stuff. W'en they think nobody's lookin' they're down on their knees huntin' grass-'oppers with their 'ats, and you bet your sweet life they're not catchin' them to make soup of.

"They 'ave six months of a close season to give

the fish a charnce to breed, and if a poor cocky with a selection on the river wants to ketch a few fish to eat 'e runs a risk of bein' put in the boo, or payin' a fine. That's in the winter time, too, w'en the fish is easiest to ketch. Then the trout get as fat as mud, and swim into the little streams no bigger'n gutters to shoot their eggs, and you can ketch 'em in your 'and; and why shouldn't you, I ask? Ain't it sporty to ketch fish in your 'and? You 'ave a go at a brim in a tub of water, and see 'ow you'll get on. You won't get it in a week. But if you go tryin' to ketch trout with 'and or anything else for the six months, they'll fine you 'eavier than if you bite a policeman, and, Lord knows, some of them want bitin'. No, Brownie, w'en you come talkin' to me about trout you've got to know something, or I'll trip you up. You'll always get yourself 'urted amongst the guns if you don't know the trigger from the muzzle."

GOLIATH JOE AND THE SILVER DRUMMER.

"Black bream don't know nothin' alongsider silver drummer," said the ancient man with the scarred forefinger.

Several rock-hoppers—users of long rods and landing nets—were clustered round the corner of the couch sacred to the anatomy of the old fisherman known to the club member as Goliath on account of the strength of his piscatorial narratives.

"I seen a thing 'appen the other day," he went on, "provin' that drummer is one o' them fish wot's been to college. You know the camp at North Head, Geordie?" addressing Brown, his only consistent stand-by for tobacco and small sundries.

"Seeing I built most of it out of wreckage ten years ago, I should think I did," replied Brown.

"That's the place," said the old man. "But I've done my share since, keepin' it in repair. I was fishin' for drummer there quite recent. Me and Tommy Tamson, Jack MacFillum, and Alf. Coombes was down there for a fortnight, but they couldn't seem to get on to the fish nohow."

"It was a never-fail ground for me," remarked George.

"No doubt—of a sort," returned the old man. "They caught plenty of black bream, trevally, squire, and things like that, but they couldn't fasten to anything big, while I got 'em whenever I liked. They all wanted to have a go with a solickin' drummer, and they used cungevoi and crab for them same's me. There was one bosker I couldn't get

out nohow. He weighed all out I should say a hundred and nineteen pounds."

"How did you know?" asked the billiard-marker, scornfully. "Did yer weigh him? Did yer even 'ook him?"

"Hook him!" echoed the old man, scornfully. "I couldn't miss hookin' him at first, but I jagged his face about so much he turned up takin' the bait for a day—couldn't bite for toothache, I suppose. Next day he sprung a new caper on me. He swallowed me bait and swum straight into an 'ole and deliberately sawed the line on the edge of a rock. Then he swum out and banged his old nadget on the rock till he loosened the hook. Two minutes after he was chummin' up to a leather-jacket, and eventually got the jacket to hook his spike in the bend o' the hook and jerk it right out."

Someone blew a long whistle smokeward, but as everybody there knew the leather-jacket could erect or depress its head-spine at will, no one looked surprised.

"I see that daughter of yours has been paying you a visit," remarked Geordie.

"Yes, 'ow did yer know?" replied Joe.

"You're speaking as if she'd been giving you the rounds of the kitchen."

The old man grinned. "She put a noo one on me this time," he said; "she gets round with a broom pretendin' to sweep up aitches."

"Is that all about the drummer?" asked Geordie.

"That was the end of me tryin' to catch him," went on the romancist. "I reckernised him as a fish what knew more'n me, so I chucked him a lot of soft cunгы to eat. He looked at it disdainful for a second, and then seein' there was no 'ook in it, he buried six pieces in his stride. The leather-jacket got the rest, but he hunted him, and comes up to the top and gives me a grateful look. Seein' he was inclined to be soshable, I flung him a couple

more mellow pieces. He swalleyed them, too, without a wink, and then went down out o' sight.

"He come back in about three minutes lumberin' two other drummer about thirty pounds each by the pectral fins. I outs with my line at once. He leads one of them coves up to my bait, and before you could say 'Police' the young 'un snapped it, and I socked the 'ook 'ome. Five minutes after I had him on the rock, and was in again for his brother. I caught him easy, too. Then I sees what the old cove was doin'. He was bringin' his friends along to get caught, and when I caught the second he comes up to the top o' the water and grins. He was my friend for ever.

"The same thing 'appened next day. My cobbers couldn't catch any drummers, and I had all the fights with the big 'uns, takin' good care always to fish on the one rock where there was only room for me. I s'pose in the next six days I caught forty-nine drummer, runnin' from thirty to seventy-nine pounds. One afternoon there seemed to be none about, but the old cove was there for his daily grub. Seemed to me he'd got through all his relations thereabout, but I pretty soon let him know he wasn't goin' ter get fed for nothin.' He looked as if he understood, and he swum off, and presently comes back with a fat old drummer alongside him. He leads her to a crab bait, and I had her out in ten minutes. She gev me a good go—kept swimmin' back to him, but he kept out in the open away from the rocks, and that gev me a chance. She weighed bloomin' near a hundred-weight, and was full of roe. She was very tough, though, and we couldn't eat her.

"Next day the old cove had a very unwillin' angular old fish with him, and he had a great job gettin' her to bite. She kept backin' round away from the crab, and lookin' him square in the teeth like's if she was askin' questions. I saw Old Silver

quiverin' along his dorsals, and when you see a fish do that you can take your affy he's lyin'."

"Lucky you haven't got a raised backbone," interrupted the marker. "You'd tear your clothes some."

Goliath looked at his interrupter over the edge of his spectacles blandly, and then quite casually remarked: "Hullo! you there again? How's jelly-fish bitin'?"

The marker, a new-chum, who had recently been stung by a long-tentacled stinging blubber, subsided amid a chuckle.

"Well," resumed the old sport, "the big angular drummer took the bait at last, but by josher, she took playin'. I'm sure she butted the old bloke a-purpose in one of her rushes. Fight! By gosh, she was the best fightin' drummer I ever 'ooked, and it took me twenty-nine minutes to beat her. Send I may live! I sweated that much it looked as if I'd been under a shower; but I got her. When I examined her, I found she was another bloomin' female. Then I seen the old chap splashin' about near the top of the water tryin' to attract my attention. He had a plump juicy young drummer alongside him. I threw in at once, but he stops up on the top with her, and shakes his head and winks. Then he swum off with her, and I tumbled to what it all meant.

"He had got me to catch his wife and his mother-in-law, and was off on a new domestic career."

MUGS—AND OTHERS.

"You take it from me," said Goliath Joe to the fellows who clustered round his corner of the couch in the club room, "a fisherman can get more nasty things 'appen to 'im at once than anybody else."

"Meanin'?" said Micky Moran, the old man's verbal enemy.

"'E can get baited, get the 'ump, get a burnt neck and peeled beak, get 'is boots full o' water, burst the seat of 'is pants, an' get ten mosquito bites all at once. My sympathies is always for the unfortnit fisherman."

"That's nothin' to a wood and coal merchant's troubles," said Micky, who supplied the burning needs of a large population. "I get a thruck full o' peppermint blocks worked in on me, the inspecthor o' misures and weights drops in sudden, a woman complains that she paid for box or myall an' got turpentine wot burns black, an' the wages board restricts the number o' me apprentices and bungs up th' wages o' me two min, all in wan day."

The old fisherman withered Micky with a steely glare. "All things you could help, Micky," he said. "You break out into liberality to your men an' fairness to your customers, an' the gardyan angel of 'onest wood an' coal merchants 'll shield you from 'arm. What I was sayin' is that the things wot 'appen to a fisherman 'e can't avoid. You bring all your trouble on yourself, Micky. Say your prayers oftener, an' you'll be better treated."

"The worst things that 'ave 'appened to me 'ave

been mugs," he went on. "They bust all the rules of all the games anytime, but if there's any game they can do more fool things in than in any other it's fishin'. Two of 'em got me to go fishin' with them one day, and when we got in the boat and shoved off they coolly told me they couldn't pull. One of 'em said 'e 'ad a weak 'eart and couldn't pull up the anchor. I cured 'em both. 'You've got to pull this boat,' I ses, 'or else you'll swim ashore.' 'Not me,' said one, an' 'I can't do it, really,' said the other. I didn't waste no time. The boat was about twenty years off the shore, so I shot the two oars overboard, and bolted aft and pulled out the plug. 'If you can't pull, you'll have to bally well swim ashore,' I ses. One grabbed a stretcher to jump out, and the water poured in the plug 'ole. I jumped over, and they got the plug back w'en the boat was 'arf full. I swum to the two oars, and was goin' in with them when they yelled that they'd pull; so I swum back to the boat and gave 'em the oars to see if they could. They managed after a fashion, so I got in the stern an' baled while they raised a fine crop o' blisters. They give me a terrible name now, but they don't say they can't pull.

"Another time I 'ad a cove pratted in on me what was the champion bait-user of England. Suttinly 'e paid 'is whack o' the six shillins for the boat an' bait, but it was w'en prawns were sellin' in Sydney at five bob a quart, and all they gave us with the boat was about a quart. O' course the boat-owner lost money on it, but 'e made it in the summer w'en bait was plentiful. But wot knocked me was this lop-eared, bumble-toed mule using prawns as if we had a bucketful. He stuck one on, threadin' the 'ook through it crossways, not lengthways. Then 'e stuck another on the same way, and in two minutes 'e 'ad ten prawns on the 'ook with a fringe of 'eads one side an' a fringe of

tails the other. 'E was jest goin' to pelt all that bait in at once w'en I nailed 'im. 'Wot are you fishin' for?' I asks 'im. 'Brim,' he says. 'I thought you was fishin' for sea-serpents,' I ses; 'take nine o' them prawns off.' 'What for?' 'e says. 'Take 'em off or I'll chuck you out o' the boat,' I says. 'Did you buy a private supply? If you did you can use 'em as you like, but them prawns belong to three of us.' Then I divided the lot into three 'eaps, and gave 'im 'is 'eap. 'E looked pretty sour, but that's no good with me. At the finish 'e had most of 'is left, an' me an' my cobber 'ad a few nice brim, while 'ed 'ad a skinner except for cattiees. Brim? 'E couldn't look at 'em. We used 'is 'eap in the end.

"I 'ad one good pot out one day, a stumpy cove, all muscle, wot liked pullin'. There ain't many of 'em built that way. The other bloke in the boat with me was a big man, with a tired feelin'. He'd pull if 'e 'ad to, but never rushed the middle thwart. Well, this little sawn-off joint pulled us two miles up the river an' two miles back against the tide, an' said 'e enjoyed it. W'en we was comin' back in the train I says to 'im: 'You're not a bad cobber in a boat; but you've got one failin', you're too selfish. My friend there's an old inter-State oarsman, an' 'e wouldn't come out unless 'e thought 'e was goin' to get a charnce at the oars. He'll be miserable all the week on account o' you monopolisin' the pullin'. He enjoys it better than fishin'. 'I'm very sorry Joe,' 'e says. 'I never thought of that. I thought you'd both be glad if I done it.' 'Didn't you see 'is face w'en 'e was sittin' there idle all day?' I says. 'No,' 'e says, 'he was behind me.' 'Well, you orter seen it,' I says, 'then you'd 'ave been real sorry. However,' I says, 'don't let it occur again.' 'Alright,' 'e says, 'I won't,' and w'en we got back to Sydney 'e shouted for the two of us an' asked us to forgive 'im, which we did after two long beers."

WOMEN AS FISHERS.

Whenever Goliath was asked for an opinion on a question connected with either the sport or the business of fishing, he could be relied upon to back his expressions with cogent reasons, and supply instances to clinch his arguments. His love of the picturesque, which is so cruelly maligned by those who do not understand fishermen, enabled him to ramble into the realms of unveracity with ease. Sometimes he remained in the realms of truth, but that was when he was very earnest.

The men had been discussing the softer sex as fishers, and Melton, the bank clerk, who was a bit of a lady-killer, had just remarked that he had enjoyed the time of his life on a fishing excursion with two young lady friends, at Yarra Bay, Botany, catching flathead.

The old fisherman adjusted his spectacles, and gazed at the young fellow with the calm scrutiny of a surgeon looking at a prospective job for his tools of trade. The old man did not like his style or his airs.

"Wot you don't know about the vishouser sex ——" he began.

"You mean the gentler sex, don't you, Joe?" interrupted Belton with flippancy.

"I mean wot I ses," returned the old man. "In my young days they might 'ave bin softer than us, but now that sort 'as nearly all died out. Wot you don't know about 'em would fill a big vollum, an' if it was read to you, you wouldn't understan' it if you lived to be a million."

"I'm young, I admit it," replied Belton, laughing satirically; "but I'm willing to learn all I can from the lips of the wise."

"A cove was readin' the other night at the Literary Institoot," said Goliath, "wot a bloke with a fishermen's moniker name of Kipperlin' said about a rag an' a bone an' a 'ank of 'air, and the female o' the speeches bein' deadlier than the male. You'd better studdy 'im a bit. Wen you're as old as me, sonny, you'll admit that there never was a clever bloke that some girl couldn't twist roun' 'er little toe. They're like a cat, an' you're like the fox that went after it. A cat can run up a tree, but a fox can't, an' that one trick'll beat a fox every time."

"Women don't climb trees," interrupted Belton.

"Who said they did?" retorted Joe. "I'm speakin' a parrable. The trees they run up is the sort wot grew in the garden of Eden with enticin' froot on 'em. O' course you won't understand that. I can see the end o' you, married before the bank lets you, to some giddy skirt wot wants to look young all 'er life, dodge rearin' kids, an' keep you dancin' as 'alf a man till you break away an' make a goat o' yourself with some other proxided, pink-checked bit o' fluff."

"What's all this got to do with women fishing?" asked George Brown.

"Nothin'," said Joe, "it's ony by way of instruct-shun fur a cock-sure young bantam. I remember wen I first took a woman out fishin'. I put 'er up in the bow to attend to the kellick, an' she reckoned she orter be in the stern lookin' w'ere she was goin' an' trailin' 'er 'and in the water to put the boat off 'er course. She was alright at floppin' the sand-bag in wen I told 'er, but wen it came to 'aulin it up poor Philgarlick usedter man the capstan. As ter pullin', she caught a crab onct, an' nearly busted a paddle wen she upended, so she never tried to do it again. That ended 'er fur me as a fishin' cob-

ber, an' now I'm content to be married to one wot cooks the fish I bring 'ome proper."

"When did women first take on trying to fish?" asked one of the men.

"Wen Noah was in the ark," replied Goliath. "'Am and Japhet was pretty good at brimmin', an' their women-folk 'ad a shot at it, but bless yer, they got inter trouble with the skipper through tryin' to use the ony two worms on board instidder fishin' fer bung. Noah threatened to keel-'aul 'em if they monkeyed roun' any more in the zoo colleckshun, so they went outer the game."

"I think," said George, "that while some women will never be classy as catchers of fish, those who do tackle the game thoroughly are really clever at it. They've got two great essentials for success in their greater imagination and keener sense of feeling than us."

"That's your opinion, Geordie," replied Goliath. "I don't yield to any woman in matters o' taste, smell, seein' or feelin', although they beat me in 'earin'. A doctor I useter fish with at Como uster try to convince me that they 'ad another sense called percepshun. 'E said 'e 'ad a idea that one time they must 'ave 'ad antenny—feelers 'e meant—but they got wore off an' they got longer tongues as compensashun. Insex 'as still got 'em. That was before Adam 'an Eve spoiled the game fur the rest of us."

"I have found them very teachable and practical in a boat," said another of the men.

"Yer must 'ave caught 'em young then," returned Joe. "I'll tell yer another experience I 'ad with 'em ter show yer 'ow onteachable they are. I got indooiced ter take two of 'em out one night at Berowra brimmin'. The job I 'ad ter get moored was beyond tellin'. Lumme, they wos useless cargo, but they knoo more before I got done with 'em. That night the catties was real wicked. It

never troubles a catty whose bait 'e's mumblin', an' the two of 'em cort Mister Wiskers at onct. They 'auled 'im over ther side an' inter the boat before I could stop 'em. One girl planted 'er 'oof on the squirmin', flappin' fish muckin' up the lines before I could stop 'er, an' got a stab in the ankle. The other got a barb inter the ball of 'er thumb. I managed ter get the one with 'er 'and stabbed all segarnio before long, although she reckoned I was cruel diggin' an 'ole in 'er 'and with a knife to get the poison out. I sucked it clean, an' in a hour she was pretty chirpy agin. The other wouldn't let me do nothin' to 'er foot. I don't know yet wether it was dirty feet or shyness. Anyhow, she stood the pain, an' we finished fishin' with a few bonzer brim, none o' which they cort."

"You ought to have taken her home," said Belton, but the old man disregarded him.

"I'll fold up my line," said the one with the stabbed foot. 'Fold it,' mind yer," he continued. "She meant wind it up, o' course. The other one went on fishin', but she didn't like puttin' 'er 'ands into the gullet-mut."

"What's that?" asked one of his auditors.

"Mullet-gut, said respectable," replied Goliath. "I 'ad to call it somethin' in front of 'em. Mindyer, I've got no objecshun to the oily stuff. It feels slimy, but it cleans yer 'ands lovely. I 'ad to put the bait on for 'er every time, an' she pricked too many fish, so finally they got narked an' cleared out."

He paused long enough to wrap himself round a foaming pewter, and resumed.

"Wot I've got agin 'em is they 'aven't got patience, matches, a knife, pockets, or brim fingers, 'xcept a odd one 'ere an' there. The only things they carry any real good is 'air-pins."

"How did the one with the barb in her foot get on?" asked George Brown.

"Fearful," replied Goliath. "She paid fur bein' too shy or the other thing. She 'ad a bad foot fur three month's, cos the catty's barb 'ad bruk off in the wound an' worked in instidder out. That's the way with them barbs. The wound wouldn't 'eal, an' she spend pounds on it. One day, three months after, when it was feelin' easy, it itched, an' she rubbed it with 'er 'and, an' felt somethin' 'ard. Then she got a pair o' pliers an' pulled at the 'ard thing an' out come two inches o' clean white barb. I got it 'ere in my pocket. It does me fur a tooth-pick."

Some of the men favored Belton's view of women, and the bank clerk got home on the old man by remarking:

"Well, whether they are good fishing companions or not for old fellows like you, there's one thing no woman can stand in a boat, and that's a cock-eyed man."

"Faith, that's thrue," remarked Micky Moran. "Yez can't deny it. If the otherr sex hates you, Misterr Goliath-Samson, blame it on to yer oiye."

Goliath rose sadly, and, looking at his two critics, remarked: "The man wot wants 'em can' ave 'em. Adam fell in through knowin' 'em, an' Micky an' the future embezzler 'ere will get their own lessons in good time. Gimme a man in the boat every time when yer want ter do seryus fishin.'"

THE WHALER AND HIS RAY.

One o' the rummiest and meanest coves I ever knew," said Goliath one evening, "was a feller fisherman. The on'y redeemin' point about 'im, like about some of our politishuns, was that 'e could ketch fish, an' that orter count when the last trumpet sounds, becos St. Peter was a fisherman, an' 'e may let 'em through the pearly gates to the oyster feed inside. There's a sorter freemasonry about us fishermen that gets us in on ther nod to various places."

"What about lone fishermen?" asked George Brown.

"Johnny Woodsers an' them sort," replied the old man, "is ony found in pantomimes. This cove wasn't a lone sport becos I sometimes went out with 'im. I didn't go too often, though."

"Why?"

"Well, fur one thing, becos 'e was a born thief. 'E'd even pinch my 'ooks an' sinkers when I wasn't lookin', when 'e 'ad plenty in 'is own bag. I took 'im round to North 'Ead one day an' lumme, 'e pinched a bamboo rod an' a plant o' lead belongin' to the blokes that fished there reglar."

"You didn't stand for that, did you, Joe?" asked one of the crowd round the old man. All the men knew the unwritten laws about stores of lead in rock crevices.

"I did not. I made 'im carry the rod back over the boulders when 'e'd got a quarter of a mile on the way back, pretendin' I didn't see 'im carryin' it

till then, and while 'e was gone I tipped all the sinkers out of 'is bag an' hid 'em in an 'ole. I found 'em next time I went round with some o' the reglers, an' told 'em what I'd done. Send I may live, they did larf."

"I'd have cracked him," said George, who was swift to resent that sort of behavior. Being a rock fisherman, he observed the ethics of the game.

"Oh, 'e struck trouble enuf," replied the old man. "Wen 'e tried to scale on the tram for a section he bumped a rough guard who knew 'im by name an' repitation an' 'ad 'im prosecuted. Cost 'im eleven bob tryin' to save that penny, an' 'e weeps over it yet."

Joe added that the only name he knew his miserable friend by was Bob the Whaler, and that the Whaler had built a hut on the coast somewhere out of timber and other flotsam he had picked up, and was making a living at fishing and marine curio selling.

"Funniest place I was ever in," said the old man. "Bein' mostly salt-soaked wood, the inside was a regler b'rometer for tellin' wen rain was comin'. On one wall 'e 'ad sharks' jaws all ranged one above the other. 'E used to wash sponges 'e picked up on the beaches after storms. They wasn't much chop, but sometimes mugs used to buy 'em. All sorts of odds an' ends was there, anything at all 'e thought 'e could get a copper out o' some softy with, but shells an' fish was the best things 'e 'ad, an' brought in the most money. 'E 'ad water laid on to the 'ut. It came outer the rock at the back o' the 'ut an' 'e led it with a bit of old pipin' into a corner, pluggin' it with a cork instidder a tap. When the spring at the back overflowed, it run round the 'ut in a little gutter into the sea. 'E washed 'isself in a pool 'e cut jest outside the door, which 'ad no 'inges but swung in upside-down bottle-sockets made very neat."

"I used to see him in town sometimes going to the Savings Bank," said the bank clerk.

"Carryin' 'is old bandy-legged umbrella, I'll bet," said Joe. "I thought so. Geordie collared ther gamp fur a lark one day, an' when 'e opened it got a shower o' mixed things, some stole an' some come by 'onest out of it. It cured Geordie of bein' inquisitious."

George Brown grinned, and said he had dirt in his eye for a week from the shower.

"There was chokers growin' in a bit of earth 'e carried there," said Goliath.

"What are they?" innocently asked one of the men.

"Young marrers what climb trelluses," said Goliath; "I thort everybody knew wot chokers was."

"Chokos," explained Brown.

"Wot do you want ter chip in for, Geordie?" asked the old man, heatedly. "That's wot I said; you know I did."

"Ye must be color-blind in the tongue, then," interrupted Micky Moran, who had come in a few minutes before.

"Hullo, Mister Micky Moran, are you there?" returned Goliath. "Micky, you've never opened your mouth yet without breakin' the last stror on the camel's back. Wot's this I 'ear about you gettin' in bad with the p'leece sargent?"

"And phwat is ut?" replied Micky truculently.

"Stretchin' over the back fence an' swiggin' the sergeant's beer left out fur 'im doin' 'is round past the back gate of the pub," replied the old man.

"You're a liar," said Micky, "an' fur two pins—"

"Talking of beer, let's have a moistener now," interrupted one of the party, who was always ready to purchase peace with a shilling or two.

They had enough to bury the hatchet, and then somebody reminded Goliath about his friend Bob the Whaler.

"I learned a few things from 'im that 'elped me in fishin'," said the old fisherman, "becos there's no doubt 'e could fish. 'E told me ther best fish 'e knew was wirrahs if they were tret proper an' skinned like a leather-jacket before cookin'. It was 'im told me wenever I met a Customs-'ouse officer to begin pokin' 'im about the body to emphersise a point, becos the officer'd keep on dodgin' ter avoid 'is 'idden cigars bein' broke, an' 'e'd finally 'aul a couple out an' give 'em ter me. An' 'e was right. I've tried it a few times, an' it never fails. 'E told me never to buy terbacker in wet weather, an' little natral 'istry facts like that."

Then came a long pause, and Goliath's oldest friends knew that the reputations of Munchausen, de Rougemont, and other characters were likely to be jeopardised. With a sigh the old man took up the thread of his story.

"One mornin' we were camped down at Pitt-water fur fishin'. It was a balmy winter's mornin', and we were balmier lookin' fur brim wot we orter knew 'ad departed. We watched the slow gleamin' o' the sunrise, and the Whaler got a idea. Ther sun was streakin' its first slants o' light across the ocean, wich we couldn't see becos the 'igh land from Nooport to Barrenjoey 'id it from us. Over our 'eads a bonzer eagle was soarin' like a small airyplane, an' a shag was lookin' at 'im sideways, afraid ter make a dash in fur the hardiheads an' pilchers wot was schoolin' round the beacon 'e was disfigurin'. Nothin' doin' fur us, altho' we 'ad live nippers an' crook prorns, so I was watchin' the little 'appenin's of nature wot makes the time pass without a bloke losin' 'is patience wen the fish ain't feedin'. Jest near us, takin' not the least notice of us was two little swallers. They 'ad their mornin' bath an' sat swingin' on a rope wot moored a boat, preenin' their feathers and chuckin' out

their little chestnut breasts as proud an' unconcerned as could be."

"Suddenly the Whaler says to me, 'See the Lion spittin' fire an' smoke.'"

"I looked north, and seen wot it was. A ray o' the sun was gildin' a wet rock on the face o' Lion Island until it looked like's'f it was ablaze, and beyond it on the shore near where the Maitland boilers is near finished rustin' a blue 'aze stretched out as'f it come outer the Lion's mouth."

Goliath added that he explained it to the Whaler, who would not accept the natural explanation, but said it was a vision indicating that the British were hard at work prosecuting the war with heavy artillery.

"'I'll show yer somethin' nearer an' more interestin,' 'e ses," the old man went on. "'See that shag on the beacon out there. I'll bet yer a bob I can drop 'im in the water without a gun!' I took 'im on, an' although I lost the bob, I didn't mind, becos what I seen was worth it. 'E whistled a strange toon, an' a bloomin' big torpeder ray—you know, Geordie, one o' them sort wot gives electric shocks—sticks 'is 'ead outer the water near. Bob pointed ter the post an' the shag, an' the ray flourished 'is tail in the air likes'f 'e understood, and dove under. In two minutes that shag flopped into the water like a 'owlin' corpse. Wot the torpeder 'ad done was swim up to ther beacon, rest agin' it, an' then shoot a 'ole charge of electricity up the wood into ther shag, an' down it flops."

"That's a whopper," said Micky.

"It's the truth," said Goliath. "Micky I'm not one o' them blokes wot kills ther candle wot lays golden eggs at both ends. My name's safe fur ever frum the p'leece records. I found out after that the Whaler 'ad such a reel understandin' with the ray an' used ter cure 'imself o' rumatism be pressin'

'is 'ands on its batt'ries in the shaller water. 'E could take a shock that'd put me down an' out."

The story reminded various members of the group of experiences with torpedo rays and electric eels, and when fishermen start on them snake-stories have to take a back seat.

Goliath broke into the conversation which he had listened to with ill-concealed disgust.

"I didn't finish about the Whaler," he remarked. "The frenship between 'im an' the torpeder died sudden owin' to 'is meanness an' desire to save candles. 'E sedooxed 'is water cobber into gettin' into a wooden sorter cage which 'e filled full o' oysters an' things the fish liked. Then 'e ankered the cage clost to the 'ut, and rigged up a wire current-ketcher to connect with a wire leadin' to a electric bulb wot 'e pinched outer the Devonshire-street subway. The torpeder stood lightin' up the 'ut fur two nights, an' then busted 'is way outer the wooden cage, an' 'as never been sighted since. The last the Whaler saw of 'im was a streak on the 'orizon o' the ocean like's'f 'e was makin' fur Lord 'Owe Island. If any o' you coves meets 'im over there you might tell 'im the Whaler's doin' time fur pinchin' the bulb. It'll cheer 'im up."

ON SELLING FISH AND WHALES AND OTHER THINGS.

"Some o' them men wot sells fish orter confine their attenshun to wild rabby," remarked Joe Smith, the old fisherman whose honorary title of Goliath had been bestowed upon him by one of his mates in the long ago. "It takes a bit o' common sense ter sell fish."

"They have a hard time," remarked George Brown, the old man's stand-by for boat trips, liquid refreshment, and tobacco for his big-bowled "cadger" pipe, which absorbed half a plug at a fill. "It's no joke walking all day with a heavy basket of fish."

"They'd have easier times if they went about it right," remarked the ancient. "Wot's the good of tryin' ter bluff people inter believin' that blackfish and tarwine is black bream because they're shaped something like 'em? Not that they're bad fish any of 'em. It don't matter wot kinder fish yer sell in this country so long's they're fresh and been gev their proper names. There's no lack of buyers of fresh fish."

"No doubt about some of it being crook," remarked one of the men.

"Crook!" echoed Goliath; "it fair 'ums. Fish wot sings a mournful toon orter be dumped, and so ort the people wot sells it."

"How are you going to make people eat more fish?" asked George Brown. "It's true, isn't it, that folk do not eat enough fish?"

"Quite right," replied the old man. "But they'd eat more if it was shoved at 'em fresh. How'd I make 'em eat more? I'll tell yer. I'd buy in the market same as anyone else, an' I'd clean my fish there, not carry 'em round with their guts in. Then I'd 'ave a clean basket wot was scrubbed with 'ot water every evenin', and a clean cloth at the bottom of it, and a lot o' ferns or parsley on the top o' the fish. Yer can buy a bundle o' parsley fer a penny, and it'll keep a week. Then I'd 'ave a tin plate—oner them sort with the A B C round it the kids like—and put a fern or parsley on it, and lay the fish on the bloomin' greenery before offerin' it to a woman with a beak fer bad smells. She'd natrally 'unger fer them fish, they'd look so nice, and she'd get 'old of 'em and look fer their gilllets ter see if they was red."

"But you'd have the gills out, wouldn't you?" asked George.

"O' course," returned the old man, "but I'd pretty soon soon show 'er that 'er nose and 'er fingers was the best guide ter whether a fish was fresh or not. If a fish is fresh it'll feel firm wen 'eld between 'er finger an' thumb, an' nothin'll 'ide a bad smell if there's any. Then there's the eyes. She orter be told ter look at them as well as judge with 'er fingers an' nose. Want eddicatin', the women buyers, that's all."

"The trouble my people find," said one of the bystanders, "is that the men who yell fish are out of sight before the head of the house has made up her mind whether to have a fish or a joint."

"Um!" replied Goliath. "A man may read runnin' with practice, but 'e can't sell fish on the gallop. He's got ter get fish in front of a woman's heagle heye an' sniffin' beak afore she's able ter make up 'er mind. A good man—not a dirty 'awker who says 'lydy' wen 'e should say madam—a man with clean clothes, can 'elp a woman ter

make up' er mind on the point easy. I see 'em runnin' along my street with prawns an' fish, with kiddies tearin' after 'em ter bring 'em back ter customers. I could make a blind woman tell whether a fish was good in three minutes."

"Do you think fish is good brain food?" asked one of the chaps with a wink at the rest.

"O' course," replied the club-room oracle. "I believe if yer fed 'alf them poor blokes in the asylums on shark they'd get their brains back. It's fish wot keeps me young. I'm gone eighty, yer know, an' I reckon I could beat somer you kids on a rock fishin' expedition yet. There was a cove I noo once——"

"Hoots, toots," said a member from the land o' cakes, "d'ye ken ye're leavin' a guid subject to tell us what I mak' no doot'll be a lee?"

"Toots, toots yerself," returned the old man. "Scotty, ye've swallyed a moter-car, an' the spark-in' plug's 'urtin' yer. Did any of yer ever 'ear me tell a lie?"

Micky Moran, the wood and coal merchant, was not present, or the old man would have been up against trouble right away; but, as the club-room was at present peopled, all were prepared to solemnly aver that the old fellow's fish stories would have answered P. Pilate's famous query, "What is truth?"

"There yer are," returned Goliath triumphantly. "Scotty, ye'd be better if yer 'ad a thick Johnny Woodser. Wot I was goin' ter say was I noo a cove down at Eden——"

"Adam?" ejaculated a listener.

"Adam, your grandmother," retorted Joe. "I'm not talkin' about the Garden of Eden, but our own Eden, down in Twofold Bay, where the whales is got. Mad as a seven-days-a-week brimmer 'e was. Used ter do all sorts o' loony tricks, writin' ter noospapers and takin' out parties o' mugs with 'im

fishin'. 'E had a cough like a blue groper, too, an' the doctors gev him up. 'E went down to Eden, 'an the first whale they cort 'e eat a lump o' blubber as big as my 'at. It orter made 'im bilious, but it ony done 'im good, and from that day 'e started ter get better. 'E kep on whale an' milk an' oysters almost exclusive for three months, an' yer never seen a cove improve like 'im. First thing 'e begun ter drop writin' ter noospapers, an' then 'e took ter fishin' by 'imself, takin' plenty of open-air exercise."

"Try a whale," hummed one of the men, but the old chap's quick ears caught the lilt of it.

"I'd advise you ter start on berley 'errins," he said to the scoffer. "You want prompt attenshun, you do."

"Talking of selling fish," remarked George Brown, "the public would get to know the fish better if they had an opportunity of seeing them oftener."

"They would," acquiesced Goliath. "There orter be a big cold market in the centre of the city, where people should be able ter buy fish all day long, same's fruit and vegetables. It would 'ave ter be a cold place, an' either the City Council or some big workin' company could run it, without any assistance from furriners. The net fishermen would get a fair deal, too, that way, because they would be shareholders. The public would make the prices, and everything would be fair and above-board. The fish agents won't publish the prices they get now, an' it's a common thing fer a man ter send in ten baskets o' fish to a agent an' find 'e owes 'im something instidder drawin' a cheque."

"The netters are not all angels, though," said George. "A friend of mine was an agent, and he told me how some of the netters rooked him."

"Fish seems ter contambloominate lots of people wot 'andle it," returned the old man. "I've

seen the fishermen crossin' the garfish in a basket ter fill it up, and seen 'em get nets an' boats on the nod from the agents and drop 'em in fer 'em. When you want ter know things, Geordie, there's no need fer yer to run past me."

Some of the men were preparing to depart, and Goliath made similar preparations.

"I must be gettin' along," he said. "I've got ter get up early ter-morrer. I give my old woman 'alf my old-age pension, yet she keeps naggin' at me ter work. If I didn't get up at five ter-morrer an' light the fire I'd never 'ear the last of it."

A TRAWLING EXPERIENCE.

"Lasht week," said Moran one night, "Oi seen two thrawlers close to Maroubra. If Oi'd had glasses Oi cud have made out phwat they were doin' aboarrd."

Goliath had been lazily watching two of what he called the young sharks playing snooker. Long ago he had given up advising young snooker players as to the shots to play. Half the time they would follow his advice, make a mull of their stroke, and complain that if they had stuck to the shot they originally intended they would have got it. Goliath got more fun out of watching them make their own hash of the game, and muddle up the scores when they had to mark for themselves.

But when Mick Moran mentioned trawling, the old man let his wandering eye rest upon him for a second, and then upon George Brown and a few of the regular early birds.

"If yer wanten know anything about trawlin' come ter me," he said. "I wos out on two o' the trawlers usin' otters fer catchin' fish several times."

"That's what they catch fish with in rivers in England," said one of the men.

"Which?" asked Joe.

"Otters you said, didn't you?" was the reply.

"Otter trawl nets I'm talkin' about," returned the old fisherman, "not birds."

"They're not birds, they're animals with four feet," said the man who had seen otters hunting fish in English rivers.

"Ferrets you must mean," said the old man, whose ignorance on the point evoked some merriment.

Looking round in a puzzled fashion he perceived that he had somehow put his foot into things, so he hastened to divert the conversation.

"I went out first," he said, "wen they was lookin' fur grounds they could drag the nets over without gettin' 'old o' the old roots o' the island. We cort a regler Scotch mixture. Things like puddin's an' cucumbers an' runny things come up by the ton. Wen I got the invitashun I couldn't resist it, although it turned out a sloppy business. Any noo sort o' fishin' attracks me like a fire does a Jew furnicher dealer. We cort a mermaid an' some bonzer sharks."

"I should like to see a mermaid," Belton broke in; "I'm told they're beautiful."

"We on'y got a look at 'er wen she recovered 'er breath an' scooted over the side," said the old man with a grin at his ability to parry Belton's curiosity. "I cort one myself once, but I'll on'y tell the old fellers about that, not you young, giddy girl-huntin' sort."

Others displayed curiosity regarding the mermaid, but the old man was obdurate. Possibly those peculiar mental processes of his which caused him to embellish his experiences in a hitherto unheard-of fashion were not in working order. Nothing could drag him off the trawl experiences, although he had deliberately invited curiosity. "I'll tell the old 'uns about it some time," he said obstinately.

"Puddings, you said you got out of the sea," said one.

"Jest like big Crismas puddin's'," returned the fisherman, "spotted all over like's'f with big raisins. I cut one open, an' wot d'ye think I got inside?"

"Threepence or a thimble," said Belton.

"Git yer 'ead read," retorted Goliath. "I got

my 'and full o' thorns worse than prickly-pears. It's a fact. Me 'and swelled up fearful, an' it took a lot o' good stimulant to get me right. You ask Frank Farnell erbout it. He'll bear me out."

"Oi hearrd him say he caught a whisky-shark as well as blue-pointhers and say-sharks," interrupted Micky, "but Oi though he was jokin'."

"Micky," said the old man solemnly, "Oner these times your leg will be pulled out be ther roots. Wot I was goin' ter tell yer about was the interduction o' the fust mate to a electric ray. We'd lin talkin' erbout them shockers, an' the mate, who 'ailed from the North Sea, wouldn't believe they could do wot they was credited with. It took one lesson to teach 'im. One 'aul we brung up a big messy ray the color o' yeller mud. Them rubbish, an' catties, an' doggies, an' saw-fish, an' sword-fish, an' fish with fire bellows, was all bein' chuck-ed overboard. We 'ad bits o' broom 'andles with nails druv in them an' projectin' to 'ook 'em outer the 'eap, so the word was passed erlong ter the mate that a big electric fish 'ad reported 'isself. 'That's fur me,' yells the mate, an' believe me we all let 'im 'ave it. 'I've never been shocked yet by a fish,' 'e says, an' 'e lets fly with 'is nail-ended waddy just at the side of its batteries. 'Look out,' says the science bloke on board, but 'e might as well 'ave spoke to the wind. The mate got nothin' the fust whack, but old yeller-mud was waitin' for 'is next attack. 'It 'im just alongside 'is back-bone,' I says, an' the mate done it. I dunno wot voltidge 'e put into it," said Goliath with a grin, "but the mate went up in the air an' then fell on 'is 'ands an' face on the 'eap o' fish. 'E got ten shocks in five seconds, an' then lay still, afraid 'e'd get more, an' unable to get to 'is feet. A couple of us 'ooked our waddies into his sea-boots an' 'is pants an' drug 'im orf. I dunno wot the old shocker wouldn't 'a done to 'im else. Yer never

seen such a 'eap o' misery as the mate. One more charge from the old cove an' 'e'd a bin out fur good, I think. It took 'alf a day to get 'im round, an' fur a week after 'e said 'e could feel sudden creepins of electricity in 'is body. Talk about sudden conversions, 'is was the suddenest I ever seen."

"How did you get rid of it?" asked George Brown.

"Easy," replied the old man. "Me an' two o' the others got ahold of its jaws—it can't shock through them—an' although it weighed 290 pounds, or maybe a pound more or less—I wouldn't like to tell a lie fur a pound or two—an' over it went back inter the wettery depths."

"What do you make of this trawling scheme?" asked George Brown.

"Well, they get plenty o' fish," replied the old man, "an' they're teachin' people ter eat rays an' skates."

"What's the difference between them?" asked George.

"None," replied Goliath. "No more difference than there is between a tortus an' a turtle. They belong to the same family, on'y they're like trees, there's little differences wot makes 'em get names to suit 'em. They're good ter scoff, but the point that's worryin' me is wether it's wuth spendin' sech a pile o' money on 'em ter ketch gurnards an' skates, an' come close ter the shore to spoil the inshore fishin'."

"When meat's dear fish is a good substitute," said George.

"'Er course," replied Goliath, "but the fish ain't kep' chep enuf, an' when it comes in they put it in cold stores. They don't gut it now like we done on the trawlers outside in the ocean. Wen fish 'as been squeezed in a trawl it don't keep well, an' deep sea fish don't keep like inshore ones. It orter be cleaned outside an' the guts an' gills used fer

berleyin' the grounds. I'd alter things if I had charge. The thing's costin' too much."

"Yez ought to be the Premier o' the counthry," said Micky.

"I've seen worse Premeers than I'd make, Micky, but I'd never say the same o' you," replied Goliath. "W'en you weigh in at ther last you'll be a long way short o' the worst fisherman wot ever wet a line."

ON THE TUGGANoola ESTUARY.

[This story has been added as an "extra," and to show that some fishermen can tell the truth.]

"Mick-Mack," the veteran angling guide of Tugganoola Estuary, was gutting whiting with a few long dexterous strokes of his sharp knife, the operation taking about six seconds for each fish. Michael McMullen was his name, but everybody seemed to have forgotten the fact in favor of the monosyllabic brevities.

"Just so so," he replied to my query as to how he was getting on. "I jest keep dodgin' the noose and ketchin' enough bread and butter for meself and phwat's left o' the family."

"You're going to have a good season," I remarked consolingly.

"About time, then," said the old man. "Sure, the place ain't known enough. People go further and fare worse, son."

Mick called every man "son" and every woman "my lass." It pleased the women, and did not worry the men much, especially the old ones. As a rule he was a happy-go-lucky character, taking matters very easily in the winter, but shaking them up in the tourist season. He used to say that he was the finest mixture of a man that ever stood in the Commonwealth, because his father, an Irishman, had run away with a Scotch lassie to Australia, and he had been born in Woolloomooloo, which kept his artisocratic blood from surging too high in his veins. He had been a fine oarsman and

fisherman, and having reared a large family, now all comfortably settled, he had himself rested his pegs at the Estuary, and made a good living out of piloting tourists to the best fishing spots. He possessed what was known in New South Wales as "the bream finger," and when the black bream were about he could easily make a pound a day line fishing. I had observed the old fisherman's patience and dexterity frequently, and I had extended him a couple of times when he said the bream were biting like "yellowtail."

"All I hope," he went on, "is that the women and girrls don't come too frequent. Six solid months o' them would drive me to the asylum."

As Mick was proverbially polite to the parties of fisher-ladies that he piloted, I concluded that he must have been having a few words with his good lady that morning.

"Thank hiven they're not all alike," he said. "If they all knew as much as your missus I wouldn't mind 'em. Them honeymoon couples are enough to make a cove tie himself to the kellick and go down with it sometimes. I've got to be blind, and deaf, and bloomin' near dumb with some of 'em. The mountains is the place for 'honeymoonin', not a fishin' ground. I 'ad one balmy couple out last season. Had to sit with my back to thim, my son, most o' the time."

"What on earth for?"

"By special request, son, and because if I hadn't, sure I'd have bust at the capers of 'em. Dreckly they got in the boat they was at it—kissin' and huggin'. The way they cuddled used to rock the boat frightful, and their sighs was like Murphy's old oil engine there. O' course I had to face them as they sat in the stern, and soon the lady asked me if it'd make any difference if I pulled the boat the other end first, so's I could sit facin' the bow—pull her stern first, mind yer. Hide! Well, I reckon

she had a leather conscience, son. 'No chance, my lass,' I says to her. So then they went up for'ard so's to be behind me. 'That was worse for rockin' the boat, and the bloomin' stern was stickin' up in the air like a signal of dishtress. If it had come on to blow a head wind, I'd have ducked them. Fortunately wind and tide was with me, and I soon got 'em to where they could fish. We started driftin', and she had her line runnin' under the boat—put it out the wrong side, o' course, so's to keep alongside 'er noo husband. I told her she couldn't ketch fish that way, but while I was explainin', blow me if a dirty old catfish don't take it into 'is silly head to jam 'isself on her line, givin' me the lie direct. She left off cuddlin', and started to keelhaul the fish, gatherin' the line up like a skein of wool. Then she jolted the catty in over the side and dropped the line on top of it. Now, I've niver seen a respectable catfish yet, son. They'll jab anything and anybody they can get a chance at in a boat, and grin from gill to gill while they're doin' it, so when she tried to take the 'ook out of its mouth, the slimy cove tuk and drove a barb into her finger. Be the holy powers, how she did yell, and as the poison worked in, she looked as if she'd faint. Her husband was buzzin' about like a locust, and he got howlt o' my knife, and wanted to cut a piece out of her finger. Then she called the poor divil a cruel monster, and said she wished she 'ad niver married him.

"I says to him, 'The best thing to do is to suck the wound,' and I'd harrdly said it, than he had her hand in his mouth suckin' away loike a pump. He kept at it for ten minutes until he brought the blood, and that eased her pain. I let him go on as long as he cud stand it, although I had an onion in the bag that would have settled the trouble in five minutes. I wouldn't have shtopped him for millions. By and bye she got fairly right, an' she lay

down in the stern among the cushions while him and me fished. He wasn't half a bad sort. She sorter dozed while 'im and me caught a few fish. By-and-bye she got better, and started to cry at the neglect she was bein' tret with. So he had to turn up fishin' for more lovin', and pretty soon they had made it up, and she offered to foid his line up for him, like's if it was a bloomin' tablecloth."

"But you don't get many like that," I ventured.

"No," replied Mick, as he started with the brush on his fish to get out the last vestige of blood, which he said always spoiled whiting if left in. "But take it in general they ain't much good in a boat. Even them what can pull a bit, crack up if they're asked to come home against a bit o' wind, and lots o' the other sort'll stick up a gingham to keep freckles away, when I am buckin' against a head wind. Young married couples are much worse than the old ones who've been married a long time, and got the strength of each other. If the man wants to say something suitable when he misses his fish, an' his noo bride is alongside of 'im, an' she thinks he's a real good sorter man what never swore in his life, he's likely to get apoplexy holdin' of 'isself in."

"I had a funny party of girls out one day here. They came from a college near Sydney—Croydon or Burwood, I think—and they was mixin' up nature study with fishin', which isn't a bad thing to do, mind yer, son. One of 'em caught a blue swimmin' crab, the sort with a lady's face on the back. She'd 'ooked it in a joint of a leg and it couldn't get off, or bedad it would have. Seein' it was well 'ooked I didn't bother to put the net under it, but plucked it out with me hand, and shlung it under the stern board. Dreckly it got there it started to pick a quarrel with the baler, and the girrls that end begun to look alarmed. But their attin-tion was attracted to another girrl's catch. She

had a big oyster eel with a sharp head and a foine lot o' teeth alongside, and didn't know what to do wid it. I jerked it in, when one of 'em said it would be a good specimen for the museum. The girl wouldn't have brought it in for a hundred pounds, an' yet she didn't want to lose it. Dreckly it got on deck it begun to play up, and the brave fisher-girls was up and away at each end o' the boat.

"'Ouch Ooh!' screamed one of 'em in the stern, 'here's the crab, too.' And she sprung on top o' the seat, nearly upsettin' the boat. The girl alongside her, not to be outdone, screamed like a siren, and kep kickin' out her feet one minute and pulling her skirts round her tight the next. Them at the other end was as bad, for the eel worked up their end, and I had all I could do to keep the boat from capsizin'. You never heard such a racket in all your born days, son. Pretty soon the eel, and the crab, and half a dozen lines was mixed up together, and the eel got hold 'o me by the trousers once. The boat load was what you might call disorganised. Some of 'em was on the point of faintin', and their yells set all the gill-birds and soldier-birds and goburras cacklin', too.'

"'Kill 'em!' yelled one, but what wid laughin' and tryin' to keep the boat from goin' over, I couldn't do it. You know what prim sorter misses some o' these college girrls are; well, in about three minutes after the crab and the eel reported thei'selves aboard, you'd 'a thought they was theatre dancers what 'ad been out o' practice at high-kickin' for a long while, and wanted to make up the lost time. They simply didn't care what they looked like. A mouse in a room full o' women was nothin' to it. One was lyin' on her face along a side seat kickin' cow-fashion, a bit sideways, and one was jest ready to jump into the water, when I settled the crab with the stretcher. It took me a

bit longer to deal with the eel—he was a beauty about four pounds weight. Then the boat load began to untangle itself, and blow me if they ain't all unanimous in callin' me names."

"'You're a perfectly horrid man,'" said one of 'em.

"'I didn't ketch 'em,' I says. 'Ow could I 'elp it, my lass?' I s'pose it was bein' a man at all under the circumstances what worried 'em, son,'" remarked the old chap with a twinkle in his eye. "They reckoned they'd 'ad enough."

JOE CATCHES A MERMAID.

"Is Belton 'ere?" asked Goliath one warm night when there was a fair attendance in the club-room.

"No; he's gone surfing," replied George Brown. "Do you want him?"

"Not me," replied the old man. "'E's in 'is place, kickin' round with the tarts in the water an' makin' goo-goo eyes at 'em. I don't want 'im. Ef 'e was 'ere I wouldn't tell you 'ow I cort a mermaid."

The old man relapsed into silence, but it was one of those eloquent silences which the club members recognised as the prelude to a draw upon his imagination or his memory. Both were recognised as vigorous, and not burdened by the cold glaze of facts, when the occasion appeared to him to warrant strength.

"Geordie," he remarked suddenly, "you remember that long beach offer the entrance to Sussex Inlet?"

"Wreck Bay Beach," said George.

"That's it. the name got forgotten offer my mind," said Goliath. "There's a little island a bit out from the mouth, a small low-lyin' rocky island."

"Yes," said George.

"That's where I cort the mermaid I was tellin'

yer about the other day," the old man went on with a chuckle.

The crowd gathered closer round his corner of the couch and awaited developments.

"Sure it wasn't a Lorelei?" suggested one.

"Never 'card o' them fish," said the old man.

"They're not fish; they're pretty women that sing songs on the Rhine. One might have escaped," said the interrupter.

"It wasn't one o' them, so you can make yer mind easy," returned the old man. "This was a sure-enough mermaid. Yer know 'ow easy it is to get outer St. George's Basin an' the inlet with a boat on the young ebb, an' back on the strong flood. You can do it orl segarnio then, but it's not so cush tryin' ter come in on the ebb. I got cort a bit late through the mermaid that evenin', an' 'ad ter take a risk nosin' my way in with a pullin' boat agin the ebb in the dark."

"You were lucky to get in at all," said George. "I had to beach my boat outside once."

"I 'ad a noshun I'd ketch somethin' outer the ordinary that day," said the old man. "I wouldn't tell yers a lie erbout it, but I went out without a scrap o' bait that day, an' cort my fust fish—it was one o' them big pretty-colored leather-jackets—on a bit o' skin orfer me 'eel."

"Liarr," growled Micky Moran softly, but not too quietly for the old man's quick ears.

"The wust o' you, Micky," he said, "is yer can't beleave anythin'. You're like the bloke wot could ony do one thing well, an' that was spit straight an' drown a fly. He never 'ad anyone ter compete with 'im. You can't 'elp it, but it's unfortnit—very unfortnit."

"Forget him, Joe," said George Brown; "tell us about the mermaid."

"Orright," said Goliath; "but chain Micky up.

He's like a mean bloke I knoo. If 'e owned the sea 'e wouldn't give a 'omeless oyster a shell to live in. Well, as I was sayin', 'avin' got the jacket, I was set up fer bait, an' usin' it, I soon cort some mackerel an' rock fish, an' there's no fish in the sea wot won't take fresh mackerel. I spose I cort erbout thirty-nine snapper an' other fish before I got a big run. Send I may live, Geordie, wot a run it was! I 'ad a good line out, an' knoo so long's I could let it run I'd get wot was on in three 'undred yards."

"That ought to be enough to turn a whale," said one of the men.

"But this wasn't as easy as a whale," said the old fisherman. "It was a mermaid. I remember seein' a bloke with a rod an' line tryin' ter play a man swimmin' in Coogee Baths one day, an' the swimmer done wot 'e liked with the anguler. This woman-fish done wot she liked with me fur a time, an' that's wot made me miss the tide fur gettin' back over the bar. I ony 'ad one good sand-bag down fortnitly, an' managed ter git it aboard w'ile she was runnin' with the bait. Mindyer, at this time I didn't know it was a mermaid. Wen I got the sand-bag in, she 'ad ter tow the boat, an' that fagged 'er in about two 'ours. She run me out ter the back o' the island erbout a mile, an' back to it again. Then sudden I felt the pull ease, an' gathered in line quick. Wot d'ye think 'ad 'appened?"

"Give it up," said Moran.

The old man looked at his old tormenter for a second or two, and then said slowly:

"I'm talkin' ter fishermen, Micky, not blokes wot deal in crook weights. Wot 'appened was that the mermaid 'ad flopped out on a rock on the island an' was lookin' at ther 'ook stuck in 'er 'and. No, I know wot you thort. She wasn't 'ooked in the mouth, an' I was glad o' that. I could jest see 'er in the dim evenin' light. 'Lumme, it's a seal,' I thort ter myself; but I soon see it wasn't."

Micky Moran's narrowed incredulous eyes were nearly popping out of his head in his desire to ask a question that would throw Joe off the continuity of his story, and his mouth started to open with a word, when George Brown pulled him by the coat, and signalled him not to interrupt.

"See," said the old man, putting his hat on the floor, and his pipe in the groove in the top of it. "This 'ere 'at's the island, an' the pipe's the mermaid, hangin' down in the water, so I couldn't see the lower 'alf of 'er. She was scaly like oner them lung-fishes——"

"Ceratodus." ejaculated George.

"Call 'em wot yer like, Geordie," returned the old man; "Lung-fish is the name wot I knew 'em by up on the Burnett River. As I was sayin' wen I was interrupted, 'ere's the island, 'ere's the mermaid, an' me an' the boat is the empty pewter jest 'ere."

The old chap paused.

"I'm the empty mug," he repeated, absent-mindedly inverting the measure to show how empty it was.

George beckoned the barman and asked him to remedy the droughty state of affairs. When the parched conditions had yielded to a balmy influence Goliath took up his story again.

"Scaley from the waist down," he said. "I ses to 'er: 'You shouldn't 'a fooled erbout with that bait,' I ses, 'an' you wouldn't 'a got it stuck in yer little 'and.' O' course I was astonished at 'er bein' there at all, but I didn't want 'er ter see I was surprised. 'I can't get the thing out,' she ses. 'Onest, she spoke nice clear English."

"R-rats!" said Micky Moran.

"Ef you knoo anythin', Micky," Goliath went on, "you'd know that all mermaids speaks all langwidges. They're found in every sea, an' it's nat'ral. Why, I've 'eard brimmers say that Como

brim can read. One feller told me they could write, but I think 'e was a liar."

Burying his face in the beer measure, the old man gathered strength and inspiration, and resumed.

"Ter make a long story short, I got the boat closeter the rock an' ses to 'er: 'Jump in, an' I'll get it out for yer.' I wouldn't 'ave 'armed oner them women-fish for all the red fish in the sea. She flopped inter the water as graceful as a seal, an' swum to the side o' the boat, an' hoisted 'erself in without a hand from me. 'Get right in,' I ses, but she wouldn't. She left 'er tail part' angin' out-board. Then I seen she was like oner them old-fashioned bottles wot can't be stood upright. She had ter keep 'alf-way up, so to speak. 'Does it 'urt?' I asks 'er. 'No,' she ses, 'but it's a noosance.' I seen 'ow it was. Bein' a fish, a 'ook wouldn't 'urt 'er much, but she didn't like bein' tied up. I reckerned if my old woman could a' seen me then she'd 'a bin pretty fluent, but wen I told 'er about my experience after she said I dremp it, an' ony larfed. 'Owever, I sets to with my pair o' cuttin' pliers an' nipped the barb orf. Then I pulled the rest o' the 'ook out easy, an' blew some sea-water throo the 'ole it left to 'eal it."

The old man stopped and looked about to see if there were any incredulous grins, but every man except Moran kept his face straight.

"She ses: 'Thanks, offully.' I think she'd picked up that ixpression from oner the big passenger boats, over-'earin' somer the women talk to officers. 'That's orlright,' I ses, 'you don't blame me, do you?' 'No,' she ses, smilin', 'I got curious erbout it an' the silly thing stuck inter me.' Then orl of a sudden she flung 'er arms roun' me neck an' kissed me. Then she gev a gurgly little larf an' slid inter the water an' disappeared."

"You didn't say what she was like above the waist," reminded one of the men.

"Wot's the good," returned Joe. "I never seen 'er agin, but if yer wanter know she was jest as bloomin' a beauty as ever I seen in the surf, but with less on. In fact she was barer than somer the women yer see in a theatre, but she was more worth lookin' at. I'd like ter 'ave kept 'er, but Lord knows wot would 'ave 'appened ef I'd got 'er 'ome. I'd have 'ad ter keep 'er in the bath. They tell me their scales come orf ef they don't keep wet."

"How much whisky did you have in the boat that day?" asked one of the fellows.

"On'y a quart, so you needn't throw orf," returned Goliath, "a quart's neither 'ere nor there fer all day on the water."

"I remember when I was down there hooking a dugong," said another; "but I did no more than get it to the side of the boat. It was a big female dugong, and it had breasts like a woman and flippers to hold the young one to them. I've heard sailors refer to them as mermaids. Joe might have been mistaken in that dim evening light he was talking about."

"No, I wasn't," replied the old man. "She was a real mermaid, not oner them doogongs. I've seen them too, an' they're ugly, not like my mermaid. I've never seen anything prettier than 'er on land or sea."

"Oi'd like to have had his missus here to hearr the owld liarr," growled Micky Moran.

"Micky, if you'd cort 'er," returned Goliath, "there's one thing certain. She'd never 'ave kissed yer; although I don't doubt you'd'er tried ter kiss 'er. That's one thing I'm glad erbout, I treated 'er like a lady in distress, an' I've got nothin' ter feel ashamed of."



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